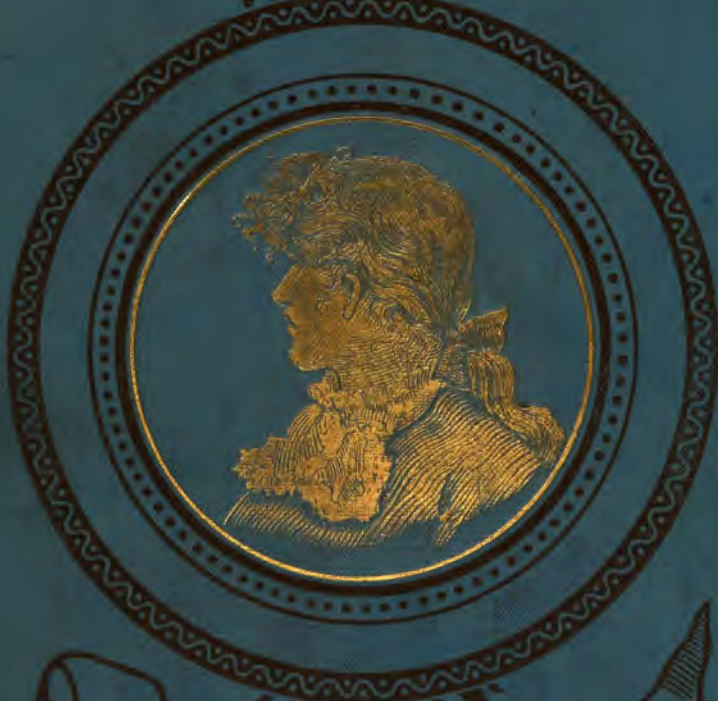
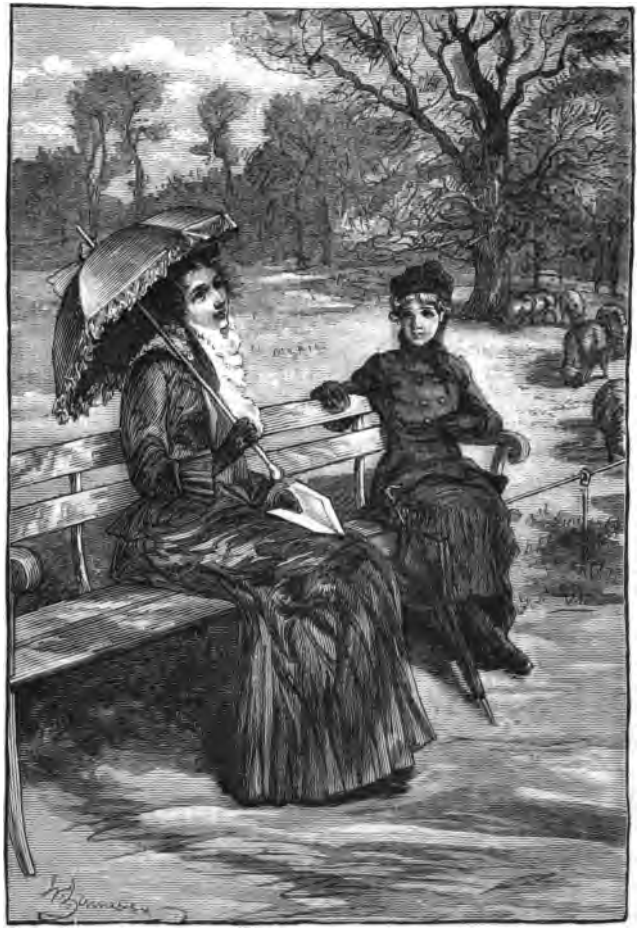
HANNAH TARNE



A STORY FOR CHILDREN

HANNAH TARNE



"Her great brown eyes were looking far away."—P. 6.

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London
MACMILLAN AND CO.
18[illegible]

HANNAH TARNE

A Story

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MR. GREYSMITH"

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY W. J. HENNESSEY

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1883

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

HANNAH TARNE.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

"Noch hat die Wissenschaft nicht vollkommen ergründet, wie sich die Heilquellen bilden, und Niemand kann ahnen, wie ein Mensch dem anderen durch unfassbare Vorbereitung zum Heil oder zur Umstimmung wird."—BERTHOLD AUERBACH.

"I WILL *not*. I tell you I shall never like her!"

"Now, Miss Hannah, don't take on so; I daresay you will change your mind very soon, and be as happy as possible."

"You *know* you don't think so."

This was true enough, and the maid-servant began again on a rather different tack: "Well, miss, it's all for the best. I heard the Captain say so himself; and what's the good of fretting? See, how rough you have made your hair; let me brush it before you go out."

Hannah hated having her hair brushed; she hated still more having to stand still, while Jane put on her jacket and arranged her necktie. Her

cheeks were scarlet with excitement, and her eyes swimming with unshed tears; but she stood tolerably still, knowing that the ordeal would be sooner over in consequence, and then she would be free to get away and nurse her wrath alone.

Perhaps a girl of her age ought to have been able to put on her own things for a morning walk in the Park; but Hannah had always been more or less spoilt—never made to do the thing she disliked, and, on the other hand, often allowed to go her own way, as if she had been a grown-up girl.

"You can come with me to the Park gate," she said, after some moments' silence.

"Will you go for a walk by yourself again, Miss Hannah?" asked Jane.

"Yes; Walter doesn't mind. I'm tired of being in this horrid house; besides, I often go into the Park by myself in the morning."

This was a fact, as Jane knew, so she gave a final drag to her young lady's crêpe-covered hat, and said that she was ready to start.

The "horrid house," as Hannah called it, was at the corner of a terrace, not far from Primrose Hill. The terrace was very sheltered, and marvellously sunny for London. From the top-floor windows you could see right across Regent's Park, farther still, the towers of Westminster, and, on bright days, the glittering roof of the Crystal Palace. Hannah had lived her short life in this

house, and as she uttered the ungracious word "horrid," a pang shot through her. A month ago, who would have dared to tell her that she would ever be so ungrateful as to abuse her own dear home? "I am getting more wicked every minute," she thought, as she walked down the street, with Jane at her side; "and it's not my fault. I hate everything and everybody."

"Miss Hannah, my dear!" cried Jane, scared into being suddenly affectionate; "come back, come back!"

They were in the middle of the road, and a hansom cab came rattling towards them.

"Hulloa!" cried the cabman; "hulloa!"

Jane screamed, and Hannah ran right in front of the horse, through the mud, to the other side. She had been brought up in London, and prided herself upon not being afraid of crossings.

There were two ladies in the hansom; one of them put up her umbrella to stop the cabman. Hannah could see that she wore a close-fitting bonnet and a long veil.

"All right, mum," said the man; "there ain't no harm done. He's only fresh!"

Once more the lady with the veil looked round, and then the cab went on again as fast as ever.

"I'm going in here," said Hannah, as she stamped the mud off her feet; "you needn't come and fetch me too soon."

"Very well. Do you know the time, miss?"

"Yes," said Hannah, pulling out her watch, "and I will be at the gate at a quarter to one."

She went on quickly, down one of the side paths, still holding the watch in her hand. It was a handsome, old-fashioned watch, with a wreath of raised flowers round the edge, and a gold face. Hannah lifted it up and kissed the round glass; she loved the sound of its sonorous tick-tick.

"Dear Aunt Grace!" said the child, half aloud. "I'm glad Walter let me have your watch. Oh, I wish you were still here! How shall I get on with Mrs. Hawksford?"

The ready tears began to fall now. She turned aside from the path and walked across the grass towards a clump of trees. She wanted to be quite alone. She was miserable and angry at the same time; rebellious, and fighting against the inevitable, with all the strength of her healthy young nature. Only a child, and struggling already with that which she had no power to alter!

"Why didn't Walter tell me before? I shouldn't have minded half so much if he had let me know before. To be forced into having a stranger in Aunt Grace's place at a minute's notice! I shall hate it. I *know* I shall hate it!" Before very long the fierceness of her passion began to wear itself out. There was a little wooden seat not far off; she walked towards it, glad to get out of the way

of two people who appeared in the distance. Some of Hannah's friends thought her a pretty child, but though she had pushed her hair back and dried her tears, she did not look her best this morning. Her black frock and jacket were made of handsome material, but somehow they did not suit her stumpy little figure. Her face was still flushed, and there were dark lines under her deep-set eyes, sad to see. The eyes were of a beautiful gray colour, and fringed with dark eyelashes; she had a square-shaped chin, and sensitive lips—altogether an odd-looking face (set off by thick plaits of yellowish hair) and, at the present moment, a very weary one.

The old seat was very comfortable. Hannah leant against its substantial arm (her feet hardly touched the ground) and stared across the grass at the distant view. The sun was shining, and the trees had begun to show signs of coming spring; three or four stray sheep were nibbling the green grass: to Hannah's town eyes they looked fat and prosperous; the drab-brown colour of their coats did not strike her as objectionable.

Presently she heard steps, and looked up. Two ladies were walking slowly towards the seat; one of them, who had a slight, tall figure, was leaning on the arm of the older lady.

Hannah left off shuffling her feet, and shrank up into a corner of the seat. She hoped that the ladies would pass on; but no! the younger one stopped,

and said in a sweet, clear voice, "If you will go on, dear Granny, I shall be quite rested by the time you come back."

"Just as you like, love; it is so warm that I don't think you can catch cold. Good-bye."

Hannah did not move; she was much ashamed of her red eyes; but as the old lady went along the path towards the lodge gate, she recognised her close bonnet and long veil. With a sudden impulse of curiosity, she turned to look at the other lady. She was quite young, and more beautiful than any living creature that Hannah had ever seen. She forgot her solitude, her misery, her one wish not to be observed, and fixed her eyes on the strange lady, who had taken a book from her pocket, and was slowly turning over the leaves. The lady wore a mouse-coloured dress, and velvet jacket, and a bonnet with sky-blue bows; her face was perfectly oval in form; her wavy hair was brushed back from her forehead, but sundry little curls would not be tucked away with the rest, and were dancing about in disorder. She did not seem to be paying much attention to her book. Her great brown eyes (from under their arched eyebrows) were looking far away beyond the grass-plot and the sooty sheep.

Hannah's umbrella fell with a crash to the ground, and knocked against the lady's dress; then she turned and smiled; her whole face lighted up with the smile, and the brown eyes lost their sadness.

"Never mind, my dear! I am afraid I have disturbed you."

"No; I was only——"

"Well?"

"Only looking at you!"

Hannah stooped to pick up the umbrella. As she stood upright, the lady's face suddenly changed, she held out her hand.

"You are the little girl who ran in front of our cab just now. We were so afraid that you would be hurt. I do hope you weren't much frightened."

"No—I mean, no, thank you. That's not the sort of thing that frightens me."

"What does, then?"

"Horrid stories about people I don't like, and—but you won't understand."

"I will try, if you don't mind telling me."

The tender brown eyes looked straight at Hannah.

"Going on always the same, and everything being miserable, and getting wickeder every day, like me. I was rude to Walter; and Aunt Grace is dead, and he says that some one must come and live with us, to look after me. I don't want her; indeed I don't!"

Hannah poured this out, not in her former vehement manner, but in a voice of suppressed misery that surprised her companion.

"I am so sorry," she said; "but don't you think that things often turn out different to what one

expects? A great man has said that nothing that we feel is so bad as what we fear. But you are such a little girl to follow that."

"I will tell you all about it," exclaimed Hannah, shifting from her corner towards the lady, and knocking down the unfortunate umbrella for the second time; "and I'm much older than I look. I am twelve."

"And I am twenty. It makes a great difference. Poor little woman!"

The lady said this almost to herself, but Hannah's quick ears caught the tone of sympathy; besides, with those glorious eyes looking pityingly at her, she could bear even a little advice on a subject that was so near her heart as this one of Aunt Grace's successor.

"Walter only told me this morning that Mrs. Hawksford is coming to live at our house. I believe she's his cousin. I saw her once when I was a little girl. I hated—I mean, I didn't like her, and I said so, and he was very vexed, and he's going away next week."

"You must tell me who Walter is."

"Walter! Don't you know? He's my brother, my step-brother, and one of my guardians too, and he has got a ship, and perhaps I shan't see him for a long, long time."

The tears began trickling down Hannah's cheeks; she put up her hand, and made a black smudge across her face.

"Don't cry," said the lady; "I should so like to be able to help you."

Hannah choked down her tears with an effort; it was a great comfort certainly, to have some one to talk to, who was not Jane. So she poured out her little story—how when dear Aunt Grace was ill, Walter had taken her to stay with some cousins at Yarmouth; and at first he had said that she might always live with them, even after he went back to sea; but then he had changed his mind, and to-day he had told her that she must be a good girl, and learn to be very fond of Mrs. Hawksford; "and I can't," said poor Hannah; "I will try, but I know I can't."

The strange lady did not ask many questions; indeed, she was rather shy; but she listened to what Hannah had to say, and seemed to understand her troubles. Very soon the child began to feel happier, and when a bell rang in the distance, she jumped up, saying regretfully, "That's half-past twelve. I promised Jane I would be in time. I *must* go."

"Would you like me to walk with you a little way?"

"Yes; very much. I wish I needn't go, but I promised." Hannah put her hand into the lady's, and looked up in her face; she had very childish ways certainly, in spite of her twelve years.

"I promised, too, to wait in the Park for my grandmamma."

"Where do you live?" asked Hannah abruptly; "I should so like to come and see you."

The lady laughed; she patted Hannah's hand. "My real home is at Highgate, but just now we are staying at a friend's house in Victoria Terrace. I wonder whether you would be allowed to meet me again in the Park?"

"That's where *we* live too—at No. 1. I am *so* glad; now I shall see you very often, I'm sure. Walter's sure to let me come."

"Tell me what your name is."

"Hannah Tarne."

"You see, Hannah, I can't do anything without consulting Granny, but we will manage to see each other somehow. Now, I want you to let me put your hat straight; may I?"

"Please," said Hannah gratefully.

"And look here, take your handkerchief and rub that black smudge off your forehead."

Hannah looked up and laughed. "I always *am* untidy," she said; "and I was cross with Jane when she wanted to dress me."

"You are not cross now?" Hannah shook her head. "Well, promise me to behave nicely when you get home, and you will feel much happier; and don't say any more unkind things about Mrs. Hawksford."

"I will try."

"I must go back to the seat now; good-bye, little

Hannah." Hannah put out a stiff arm, and shook hands—she had just caught sight of Jane coming across the road—"Good-bye," she said.

"Who is that you have been talking to, Miss Hannah?" asked Jane, who was of an inquisitive turn of mind.

"She is a lady who is staying in our terrace."

"Oh," said Jane, looking after the slight, girlish figure. "What's her name, miss?"

"I don't know. Wait for me a minute, Jane."

Hannah left her umbrella with Jane, and rushed headlong after her new acquaintance.

"Stop! do, please!" she gasped.

The lady stopped. The colour came into her cheeks, and Hannah thought she looked like a picture that Aunt Grace had once taken her to see in a church.

"Will you tell me who you are? I forgot to ask you."

"My name is Ruth—Ruth Penwarden."

"I must go; Jane is waiting."

Hannah still held the corner of the lady's jacket, and hesitated.

"You were going to ask me something else, weren't you?" asked Ruth. "Don't be afraid."

"May I kiss you?"

Ruth smiled and stooped towards the child. Hannah flung her arms round her neck. "I thought you wouldn't mind," she whispered; then, without

looking at Ruth again, she retraced her steps and walked home with Jane quite happily.

Hannah Tarne was an orphan: she had lived a cheerful, contented life up to the present time. Walter (who, by-the-bye, was not yet Captain, though Jane invariably gave him that title) was more than twenty years older than his little step-sister. He was not very fond of her, but he thought he had done his best in asking Miss Tarne to come and keep house at Victoria Terrace, and to look after Hannah. This plan had answered very well, though perhaps Aunt Grace, in her fondness for her dead brother's child, had given way to Hannah's peculiarities of character, and done her best to spoil her. Soon after Walter's return from a three years' voyage his aunt's health had failed rapidly, and she died before Hannah could be fetched home from the seaside. The child had grieved bitterly over the loss of Aunt Grace; but Mrs. Dodd, the cousin who had taken her in, was very kind; and when Walter went down to Yarmouth he found her so happy, that he had not liked to say that she must soon come home and make the acquaintance of Mrs. Hawksford, who was to take the place of Aunt Grace. So the new arrangements had all burst upon poor little Hannah at once. She had not exaggerated in saying that she had been "rude to Walter;" it was the remembrance of her own speeches—"You don't care what becomes of me;" "I shall never like Mrs.

Hawksford,"—that helped to increase her misery. However, the paroxysm was over for the present, and she spent a comparatively happy afternoon putting her book-shelf to rights, and dusting the pet ornaments and treasures, that had been packed away for so many months.

Hannah had sharp ears, and in the middle of her work she heard the click of Walter's latch-key; she left her books in a heap on the floor, and went to peep over the balustrades. She saw him take up a letter and open it, then he shouted, "Hannah! come down."

He was a short, slight man, with quick, dark eyes: he did not look at all like a sailor.

"This is something for you, child," he said, putting the letter and a card into her hand.

"For me!" exclaimed Hannah, staring. "Why, it's your letter."

"Yes, I know, but it is all about you. There, you may go if you like. The Actons are away, but this good lady seems to wish to know you. Take it up to Jane."

"Are you going out directly?" Hannah stood twisting her fingers awkwardly.

"Yes, when I have finished my letters. Do you want anything?"

"Walter, I *am* sorry; you know—this morning ———." He had put his hand on the study door already, but he paused to say: "Eh! oh, about

Mrs. Hawksford,—Cousin Ada, I suppose you must call her. That will all come right, and you will soon get into her ways. Now run up to Jane."

Hannah went as she was told. It was not exactly a satisfactory explanation; he did not seem to understand her attempt at an apology, but she felt much happier; it was one step in the right direction. It was a pity that Walter was always so busy. What was the letter about? She unfolded it. Quite a short note in thin, pointed handwriting. Mrs. Penwarden presented her compliments to Mr. Tarne, and hoped that he would allow her to do herself the pleasure of inviting his little sister Hannah to spend the following afternoon with her, at the house of their mutual friend Mrs. Acton, whom she was visiting for a few days.

A very prim little note indeed; it took Hannah some minutes to make it out; then she glanced at the card,—

Mrs. Penwarden.
Miss Ruth Penwarden.

Hannah flushed crimson with joy and excitement. She stopped to look at the card again, to be quite sure that it was the right name; then ran upstairs, two steps at a time. She upset the heap of books, that she had left on the floor, in her eagerness to find some one who would sympathise with her. Jane was sewing in the workroom, she was not in the best of tempers, and did not at all approve of

Miss Hannah's way of bursting into the room, and knocking over the cotton-basket.

"Look what you have done, miss!"

"Never mind," said Hannah," "I'll pick them up again. I have had such a delightful invitation for to-morrow afternoon! I am going to see the lady I met in the Park. She is staying at Mrs. Acton's."

"Was it *that* lady you met, Miss Hannah?" asked Jane, suddenly becoming interested; "to be sure, poor thing, she has been there some days. Mrs. Acton's cook told me all about it. Poor thing! Yes; dear me!"

"Why do you say, 'poor thing'?"

"Well, I don't know that I ought to tell you anything about it, miss; it's not for little girls."

"Do, please," begged Hannah, putting aside the thought that she ought not to listen to gossip about other people's affairs.

After a little more persuasion, Jane launched forth into the story which she had heard from Mrs. Acton's cook:—That Miss Penwarden was very delicate; she was to have married a young gentleman of large fortune, but he had gone hunting lions and tigers in Africa or America (she couldn't remember which), and had got killed, and never came home again. And the young lady had so taken it to heart that she had never got over it, though she was cheerful-like now, and for years she had always said he would come back again, and was

always on the look-out for him, as one might say. It had undermined her health, and the doctors said——"

"What?" gasped Hannah.

"Well, miss," continued Jane, who had, according to her ability, conscientiously repeated the story that had been told her, "they do say that she can never be the same young lady again—never again," said Jane, drawing now on her powers of imagination; "she comes of a weakly family; her poor mother went off in a galloping consumption, and they say Miss Penwarden takes after her."

"I don't believe a word of it," exclaimed Hannah, indignantly.

"Oh, very well, miss! Don't ask me no more stories, that's all."

"But, Jane," said Hannah, suddenly changing to a piteous tone of voice, "she is so beautiful; she can't be ill. And besides, how does Mrs. Acton's cook know anything about it?"

"Looks are very deceitful, Miss Hannah. You might think I was strong and hearty to look at me. And as for Mrs. Acton's cook, you may be sure she only says what she knows."

"That isn't any answer. I shall ask Walter."

"Don't think of such a thing, pray, miss. Now go and play with your doll's house, do; and be sure you don't say a word of this at Mrs. Penwarden's; they don't like it talked about."

"Then why do you talk about it?" was on the tip of Hannah's tongue, but she refrained from saying it, as she remembered that she had teased Jane into telling her the whole story. She stood silent at the table, snipping a piece of calico into small pieces with the cutting-out scissors. Jane, for a wonder, was silent too. She was repenting that she had talked so openly to the child, and turning over in her mind how she could best change the subject. "Such a queer little girl as she is; you can't tell where to have her. I don't envy this Mrs. Hawksford, *I*'m sure."

"Go and dust your doll's house, do, Miss Hannah."

"I haven't opened my doll's house for a year. I don't care a bit about it."

"Look at all them books in a heap. What a pity! Shall I help you put them away?" Jane got up and went into Hannah's little room. Suddenly a thought struck her. "Miss Hannah, my dear, would you like me to trim your other hat to go to Mrs. Penwarden's in? Because we might go out now and buy the things. I'll do it for you the first thing to-morrow morning."

"Will you really, Jane? I thought you were too busy."

Hannah was pleased, she did not generally care much what she wore, but she did feel that she should like to look her best to-morrow. It was a

lovely evening, and her spirits rose out-of-doors. Jane was in a good temper, and listened to all Hannah's chattering with respectful interest, and even allowed her to choose the feather for her hat. As they passed Mrs. Acton's house, she said in a whisper, "Be sure you don't say anything about lions or tigers when you're there, Miss."

Hannah did not answer; perhaps she had not heard; so Jane turned her attention to other matters.

Hannah put all the books to rights that evening, and dusted the nick-nacks, in case she mightn't have time to-morrow. She was not much more than a baby in many ways, and her "treasures," as she called a collection of rubbish and odds and ends, were a great delight to her. Now she had a new one,—Mrs. Penwarden's note,—and then there was the card with Ruth's name on it; that was certainly too precious to part with just yet; she would take it to bed with her. Presently she had to go downstairs and sit at the side of the table while Walter had his dinner; he liked her to appear, though he was so busy reading the paper that he had no time to talk.

"I have written to Mrs. Penwarden," he said, as Hannah wished him good-night. She went to bed in a very happy frame of mind. She only waited till Jane had taken the candle and left the room, to get the card out of a table-drawer and slip it under

her pillow. She had said her prayers, of course, but there was a short verse that she had always repeated, ever since she was a tiny child, before going to sleep. To-night, after a little hesitation, she added a few extra words to her thanksgiving—"Thank God for my dear friend."

Ruth Penwarden sat with her grandmother in Mrs. Acton's drawing-room. "I have had a polite note from Mr. Tarne," observed Mrs. Penwarden, "and the little girl may come. I really feel grateful, dear Ruth, that she was not injured by the wheels of our cab: the driver was quite reckless."

"I don't think she was even frightened, dear Granny, certainly not so frightened as we were. I hope you will like her; she is the oddest little girl; but Mrs. Acton says that she has been brought up in a curious way, which of course accounts for it."

"Poor little dear!" said the kind-hearted old lady; "she must be very dull."

"That did not seem to strike her. All her troubles were about a lady who is coming to look after her. I can't get her sad face out of my head at all; we must ask her to come and stay with us, shall we?"

"Just as you like, Ruth, only don't undertake too much; wait and see what you think of little Hannah Tarne to-morrow."

Ruth was leaning back in an arm-chair; she wore a dark-red dress, with white lace ruffles. At

her side stood a tall wax candle; she had pulled it quite close to her, that she might see better to finish a delicate piece of needlework. The waves of hair that would not lie straight looked quite golden in the candle-light; her cheeks were pink, and her glorious eyes were full of love as she turned to the old lady. "I am really better, dear Granny, and truly and honestly, I have taken a great affection to this forlorn child; I feel as if I should like her for a little sister."

Exactly as the clock struck three Hannah walked up the steps of Mrs. Acton's house. The new hat was a decided success (Jane had taken a great deal of pains with it), and the little face underneath it was wreathed with smiles. Hannah was supremely happy, only rather nervous, as the servant flung open the drawing-room door and announced Miss Tarne. But the reception she met with quite took away her fears. "Here you are, Hannah," said Ruth, getting up to meet her; "now let me introduce you to grandmamma; you must be great friends."

Mrs. Penwarden kissed her and said how glad she was that she had been allowed to come.

Then Ruth said that she must take her things off. Upstairs, Hannah was delighted to find that Ruth had the room which corresponded with her own at home, only the view was a little different. Ruth showed her a sketch that she had made of a

little bit of the Park, where a few of the bushes had a decidedly green tinge, and the mist looked blue in the distance.

"If you went a little farther behind that tree," said Hannah, pointing to the sketch, "you would come to the old seat where I saw you yesterday."

"So we should; I did not think of that. Would you like to have it; then you won't forget me."

"I shall remember you *always*, as long as I live," said Hannah, scarlet with eagerness. The next minute she was holding the picture up against the wall, to see where it looked best, and when Ruth promised to buy a frame for it, her joy was full.

Downstairs Mrs. Penwarden talked very kindly to Hannah, and when tea came, she asked her to hand the cups and saucers, and treated her as if she had known her for years. No one said a word about Mrs. Hawksford, but before tea was over, Mrs. Penwarden had invited Hannah to come and stay with her at Highgate.

It is not often that a pleasure that has been much thought of beforehand turns out to be such a success. There was no hindrance to Hannah's joy till quite at the last, and that was only a momentary cloud. At nine o'clock Walter came to fetch her home: in his stiff way he talked to the ladies, and regretted that Mrs. Acton was not at home.

"I hope Hannah has not been very dull," said

Mrs. Penwarden; "we had intended to take her sight-seeing, but it looked so like rain: she must go with us to the Zoological Gardens to-morrow. Do you care about that, my dear?"

"Yes, very much indeed, thank you. I like to hear the lions roar; and there is one tiger with such a kind face, and beautiful black streaks on his nose. I always think he knows me from the other people."

"Very well; we will go and find your friend."

"Please," began Hannah, then she suddenly remembered that this was the forbidden subject—what had Jane told her? She held down her head and muttered, "Perhaps we'd better not."

"What do you mean, my dear?" began Mrs. Penwarden; but Hannah looked so uncomfortable, that Ruth came to the rescue, and changed the subject. Mr. Tarne was vexed, and apologised for Hannah's ungainly manners as soon as she went to put her hat on.

"Indeed, we think her charming," said Ruth; and Mrs. Penwarden begged that they might see as much of her as possible during Mr. Tarne's absence. He could not but seem pleased, but inwardly he thought that the sooner Mrs. Hawksford came, and transformed Hannah into an ordinary-behaved girl, the better.

However, Ruth's praise prevented him from lecturing her on the way home. She seemed to

have forgotten her temporary embarrassment, and went singing upstairs to tell Jane how much she had enjoyed herself.

Mrs. Hawksford was a good-looking widow; since the death of her husband (a dashing captain) she had lived a life of refined seclusion, not unmixed with gaiety, at a fashionable watering-place. The gaieties, however, were not of an exciting nature, and when Mrs. Hawksford received a letter from her relative Walter Tarne, begging her to come up to town and make a home with Hannah, she promptly accepted the invitation. She had a comfortable little income, a commanding person, very decided ideas on the subject of her own importance, and a great liking for pleasure, that is to say, pleasure after her own dignified notions, for of anything Bohemian, as she expressed it, she had a virtuous horror.

Some days after Hannah's visit to the Penwardens', Walter went down to talk matters over with Mrs. Hawksford, and came away very much impressed, and confident that he had secured the best possible guardianship for his sister. He was rather vexed to find that Mrs. Hawksford's arrangements would not allow her to come to Victoria Terrace just at present, not for three weeks at least; he had hoped to see things settled before he sailed. Walter Tarne had a great notion of seeing things settled at once; perhaps that was why he was apt

to feel impatient with Hannah. She was such a long time developing into the orthodox gentlewoman that he had in his mind's eye. In the meantime, till she could be placed under Cousin Ada's wing, the best plan would be to send her to stay with the Penwardens at Highgate.

Hannah received this piece of intelligence, that she was to go to Ruth for three whole weeks, with unmixed delight. Three weeks! What a long time! And she was not even to see Cousin Ada till everything was arranged at Victoria Terrace.

"There will be a great deal to do here of course," explained Walter, "and as Mrs. Penwarden wishes to keep you, provided of course that you are amenable in your behaviour, I think you had better stop till the end of next month."

"Thank you, dear Walter," cried Hannah; "I will be amenable, indeed I will." It was a pity that Hannah did not leave off there, though she had but vague ideas as to the meaning of the word amenable; but it was her fate always to say a little too much. "Then I needn't think about anything disagreeable the whole time. I can look upon Cousin Ada as a dream—a sort of nightmare!"

Walter said no more, and Hannah, quite unconscious of having annoyed him, sat down to write a grateful and ill-spelt letter to Mrs. Penwarden, in which she promised to enjoy herself immensely, and signed herself, "Your own devoted little friend."

Walter Tarne joined his ship; and a week later, Cousin Ada (preceded by a van-load of furniture) arrived at Victoria Terrace.

By this time Hannah had fallen into the ways of Mrs. Penwarden's quiet household, and the kind old lady had come to look upon her (as she said) like a second granddaughter. "And I never had another grandchild, my dear," she said to Hannah; "Ruth's father was my only child, and Ruth is an only child; so there are no more Penwardens in this branch of the family, you see."

"I am sorry," said Hannah, bluntly.

"Are you, Hannah?".

"Yes; they are such nice people" (staring up at Mrs. Penwarden); "there ought to be a great many of them."

Mrs. Penwarden smiled. "You will be glad to hear, then, that we have some relations of the same name at the Cape. We expect one of the sons home next year."

Hannah heaved a sigh: she had a serious way of looking at things, which occasionally perplexed Mrs. Penwarden.

"It *is* a very good thing," she said; "and I hope he is like the rest of his family."

"I think you will be satisfied, little Hannah," said Ruth, stopping in the middle of her practising; "now put your things on, and you shall hear some more about the Cape cousin another time."

Ruth and her grandmother lived in a quiet street, in a prim, red-brick house, that had been built long before modern æstheticism came into fashion. There was a slip of garden at the back, and a pretty view across a field. Nothing grew in the garden except a few lilac bushes and some Virginian creepers, and these were hardly in bud yet. There was a stiff staircase in the house, and a great many square rooms on either side of it.

"We can't use them all; the house is too large for us," said Ruth the first day after Hannah's arrival, when she had asked to be shown all over everywhere; "so we think it is better to shut up the rooms on this side."

"It looks dreary, doesn't it?" said Hannah, peeping into a darkened room, "and there is so little furniture, and no carpet!"

"The things were sold years ago, when grandpapa died."

"Weren't you very sorry?"

"I don't remember much about it; I am quite accustomed to these empty rooms. I used to come and walk up and down when it rained."

"And don't you now?"

"No, they are afraid of my catching cold."

Ruth shivered, and took Hannah back to the drawing-room. There was no lack of comfort on this side of the staircase; the drawing-room looked out on the street, but there was very little traffic to

disturb its inmates. One wall was taken up by a large book-case with glass doors, the grand piano occupied another; there was a curious marble mantelpiece, inlaid with circles and lines of colour. The carpet had a gray ground, strewn with bunches of roses, but age had toned it down into a pleasant kind of inoffensiveness, and before the fireplace was a splendid bearskin rug. Here Hannah loved to sit, diving her hands deep down into its soft shaggy hair. She liked it much better than the tigerskin on the long sofa; indeed, she often wondered how Mrs. Penwarden and Ruth, of all people, could endure its presence, the glass eyes were so disagreeably life-like and real. Upstairs all the rooms on the floor were cosy and snug, and Hannah had a charming bedroom, opening out of Mrs. Penwarden's morning-room, where she sat before luncheon, did her plain sewing, added up her accounts, and saw her special friends. Here too Ruth had a table, where she wrote her letters and finished off the little sketches that she made so cleverly.

These were peaceful, happy days for Hannah; she was perpetually amused, for though Ruth was not allowed to go out in cold winds, Mrs. Penwarden was an active walker, and took Hannah with her whenever she went out. She was allowed to read any book that she liked in the drawing-room, and spent many an hour on the arm of the sofa, peeping into all kinds of delicious volumes that were not to

be found at Victoria Terrace. Then Ruth taught her the second part of a duet, and showed endless patience while her pupil hammered away at wrong notes in the bass. Then there was a scrap-book in course of construction for some children at a hospital; and what child can resist the fascination of painting scraps, snipping and cutting them with a sharp pair of scissors, and pasting them into a book anywhere and anyhow she likes, as long as they stick tight? Nobody minded the chips on the carpet, and nobody scolded even when luckless Hannah upset the basin of paste in a moment of excitement. Sometimes when it rained Mrs. Penwarden sent round to invite the children of a neighbour to entertain her young visitor, and they all romped together in the empty rooms to their hearts' content.

This was delightful, though best of all Hannah loved the evenings, when Mrs. Penwarden's embroidery came out, and Hannah dropped innumerable stitches in her knitting, while Ruth sang to them in the sweetest of soprano voices, or, if she was too tired to sing, played beautiful little bits of Handel and Bach from some of the old music books that had belonged to grandmama when she was young.

The whole house was a kind of fairyland to Hannah, the people in it were more than mortal, but deep in her heart of hearts she cherished an intense love for Ruth Penwarden. The unselfish kindness and consideration for others—all the graceful ways

by which Ruth made life happy for the people about her—this was all thoroughly appreciated by the plain-spoken, awkward little girl, and helped to make her think that there was no one in the world so good or so beautiful as her own Ruth. She even took to writing poetry, and scraps of verse were found about in which the one theme was constantly uppermost that had taken possession of the child's mind. She was so much in earnest that it would have been cruel to laugh at her, even when Mrs. Penwarden came across such efforts of genius as—

> Dear, tho' my rhymes are so uncouth,
> Do let them tell you this one truth,
> I love you, oh, I love you, Ruth."

There was to have been some more of this, but Hannah dropped it in her desire to write a sonnet, which somehow never would rhyme in the proper place. It seemed as if all thought of the new life that she was about to begin under Cousin Ada's supervision, had faded from Hannah's mind. "I'm so happy now, I don't want to think about it," she said one day when she and Ruth were sitting together by the fire, Ruth in a low arm-chair, and Hannah curled up on the warm rug. The lamp had not been lighted yet, or the blinds pulled down, though the twilight was creeping up fast; a red flame blazed in the fireplace, and threw the shadows of the girls on to the cream-coloured wall; the

tiger's head was staring with his glassy eyes—it really seemed to Hannah as if they followed her about when she moved.

"Why do you have that ugly thing in your pretty room?" she asked at last, screwing up all her courage to do so.

"Don't you like it, dearie? It was given to us by a relation—some one that we are very fond of—the cousin that Granny told you lived at the Cape."

"What's his Christian name?"

"James."

"Are you glad that Mr. James Penwarden is coming back so soon?"

"Very glad. I have not seen him for nearly three years, and though he writes delightful letters it's a long, long time. I sometimes think he will hardly know me again; you see I have been so ill since." Ruth rested her chin on both hands, and looked into the glowing embers of the fire.

"Tell me *all* about it," said Hannah, nestling up closer to Ruth's side; "it's like a story."

"There is not much to tell you, little one: Jim's father died suddenly, and it turned out that he had lost all his money quite unexpectedly, and his wife was ill, and there were two younger boys (one of them is dead now). And so Jim said that he would give up studying to be a doctor, and try to make some money as soon as possible. One of his uncles is a merchant, and has houses of business all

over the world, and he wanted some one at the Cape, and he sent Jim."

"What became of his mother and the brothers?"

"They stayed in England till Jim got on so well that his uncle made him head of the Cape branch, and then he sent for them. They all live there together—at least poor George got killed by an accident soon after they went out."

"Was he—was he hunting?" asked Hannah, breathlessly.

"No, dear, it was a railway accident. It's a long time ago now, just before I first got ill."

"Will you be angry if I tell you what Jane said?" asked Hannah with wide-open eyes.

"You may tell me anything you like," said Ruth, smoothing down one of Hannah's plump little hands.

"Jane said I wasn't to," said Hannah, getting more and more excited, and plunging headlong into the whole story. Ruth listened patiently to the end. "I have so wanted to ask you if it is true, and whether you are always expecting him to walk in at the door!"

Ruth could not help smiling.

"My dearest Hannah, I hope you have not been worrying your poor little head with this story?"

Hannah nodded.

"Jane must have heard some gossip of the servants, and then have exaggerated that. I will

tell you now, in order to set your mind at rest, that Jim and I were engaged once, but when he went away and settled so far off, we (Ruth paused a moment)—Granny wished it—we broke it off."

"Then you *won't* go to the Cape too, and live there, some day? What should we do without you?"

"I don't think it's at all likely," said Ruth in a low voice; then she suddenly jumped up from her chair, and said, "Now give me a kiss, little Hannah, and go and ask for the lamp, while I poke the fire and make a blaze. We are going to have a very cheerful evening."

Hannah ran off to the kitchen. Ruth stood with the poker in her hand, staring into the glass above the mantelpiece; it reflected her slight figure, and the flashing firelight shed a red glow on her cheeks. Her eyes were bright, and the exquisite oval of her face was unchanged; she wore a brown dress, and a little lace tucker close to her neck, fastened by a small gold brooch. No fear but that James Penwarden would have known her, even had he met her unexpectedly hundreds of miles away from home; hers was not a face to forget.

"How much sorrow we make for ourselves!" thought Ruth; "endless toil and trouble! Why can't we leave everything boldly in God's hands, and be at rest? Why, even this poor little excitable child has got to learn the lesson. Imagine her not daring to talk to me about lions and tigers!

I hope, oh! I hope Mrs. Hawksford will deal tenderly with her." When Hannah came back, followed by the servant with the lamp, Ruth had unrolled a bundle of bits and scraps; she said she wanted to make some clothes for a doll that she had promised to dress, and Hannah must help her. She proposed that as they were alone they should have tea in the drawing-room. The servant drew the curtains, and put a great log of wood on the fire. Hannah became immensely interested in the doll, and sewed till she was tired; then Ruth found her a story-book to read out loud, and after tea sang her lovely little songs till bed-time came.

CHAPTER II.

THE month was drawing to a close. Hannah had received a note from Mrs. Hawksford, fixing the day for her return home. It so happened that Mrs. Penwarden had some shopping to do in town, and she offered to drop her little visitor at Victoria Terrace. Hannah was grateful; she was looking pale and miserable; she had kept close to Ruth all the morning, hardly saying a word except when she was spoken to.

"I don't suppose you will go back to school till after Easter," said Ruth; "so I hope that Mrs. Hawksford will let you come and see us; anyhow Granny and I will come to Victoria Terrace; we can't afford to lose sight of our little friend."

"I shall think of nothing else till you come," whispered Hannah, as the cab drew up at the door; without another word she took her seat next to Mrs. Penwarden, and Ruth went back to the house with a heavy heart.

Jane opened the door at Victoria Terrace; she seemed pleased to see her young lady again. "Mrs.

Hawksford has been expecting you some time, Miss Hannah," she said.

"I will go up to her at once."

"Not that room, Miss," said Jane, as Hannah put her hand on the drawing-room door; "Mrs. Hawksford sits in the back room now; it's all changed, you see."

All changed! So it was. Hannah could scarcely believe her eyes. The tiny back drawing-room had been entirely refurnished; there were velvet curtains hanging across the folding doors; all the old furniture had disappeared; its place was occupied by bran-new black tables and chairs, and the walls were decorated with small brackets, supporting huge plates. Over the fireplace hung the portrait of a gentleman in a scarlet coat, apparently unconscious that a scene of slaughter (much subdued by fire and smoke) was going on in the background of the picture.

In a basket-chair drawn up to the fire sat Mrs. Hawksford. "How do you do, Hannah?" she said; "you are not very punctual. I like little girls to come at the time that they are expected."

"Mrs. Penwarden could not come into town any sooner," said Hannah, staring round and round at the altered appearance of the room. "What makes you sit in the back drawing-room?"

"I call this the boudoir now, and I have always been accustomed to have a boudoir. Indeed I intend to make a good many alterations. Miss Tarne,

poor thing, was such an invalid that she naturally could not attend to the house as I should wish to do."

"Aunt Grace always did attend to the house," broke in Hannah, red with indignation; but Mrs. Hawksford seemed to take no notice of her. She was very busy sewing bugles on to a piece of black satin. "You will be able to help me with this another day; your eyes are strong, I am sure, Hannah, and this is such a handsome pattern."

"I don't like needlework!"

"I am shocked to hear a girl of your age say so. You ought to learn to make your own things as I do. It saves the dressmaker's bill—a great consideration that."

Hannah stood twirling her umbrella in her hand; she wanted to go upstairs, but somehow she did not like to. It was such a strange, unnatural feeling, not to be able to do as she liked in her own home.

"There is no view from the back drawing-room," she said, after a pause.

"Boudoir," put in Mrs. Hawksford.

"Yes," said Hannah; "you can't see the trees."

"That is why I decided on this view, the Regent's Park is so depressing. It is not a nice look-out certainly, but I must have the lower half of the window filled in with stained glass."

"I will go upstairs and take my things off,"

remarked Hannah, who was beginning to feel as if she didn't know what she might say next.

"Do so; you will drink tea with me now, at seven o'clock. I do not dine late when I am alone."

Hannah went slowly upstairs and opened the door of her room. Here was another shock; everything had been rearranged, and to her excited imagination the very view into the Park looked different.

"Jane!" she called, knocking at the workroom door; it was locked; "Jane!" a little louder.

"Do you want me, Miss?" asked Jane from the landing above; "I'm coming. The workroom is altered now, Mrs. Hawksford preferred it for her bedroom. Don't you keep trying that handle, Miss Hannah, there's a wardrobe up against it, and you can't get in."

Hannah stood still. It was quite true, as Jane said, that it was no use struggling with the door any longer. It was true, too, that it was no use struggling against what was inevitable; she was clear-sighted enough to see, in spite of her childish ways, that she must submit unreservedly to the new arrangements; and even as she told herself this, the whole strength of her nature rose up in rebellion. It was too hard that she should have to live in her own home when everything was turned topsy-turvy; and to have to pretend that she didn't mind, that was the hardest of all. Unconsciously she pushed against the door again.

"Let it be, Miss Hannah; you'll hurt yourself. Come up and see the workroom. Mrs. Hawksford said you were to sit there to your studies; she has had a table moved in; perhaps you missed it out of your room."

Jane held out her hand, and Hannah followed her upstairs.

"I'm very tired, Jane; let me lie down on the old sofa; I am glad that has been left anyhow."

Jane was sorry for the child, and grateful to her for taking things so quietly; she had expected an outburst of some kind or another. "You just let me cover you up, Miss, and I'll fetch you a cup of tea from the kitchen, quietly."

Hannah lay on the sofa, wrapped in a thick shawl; in a very few minutes she was fast asleep. Jane did not disturb her when she came in with the tea; she had brought it now, as there was a visitor in the drawing-room, and she did not want to be asked any questions. Mrs. Hawksford had very sharp ears and eyes, and had made no secret of her resolve to keep this disorderly household in strict order. The other servants had given warning at once, but Jane stayed on, out of a lingering liking for Hannah and the house in which she had lived for some years, and perhaps too, because the new mistress had been very civil to her. "Jane is a firstrate needlewoman," said Mrs. Hawksford; "it is worth my while to raise her wages, and keep her on."

"I might as well stay, and see what happens," said Jane to Mrs. Acton's cook; "anyhow, I know the ways of the house, and helped to nurse Miss Tarne, who was a sweet-spoken lady, if she did spoil Miss Hannah. And as for Mrs. Hawksford, she thinks herself a great manager, but we shall see if I can't manage too."

When Hannah came down to tea (a gong was sounded in the hall—that was something new) she had dark rings round her eyes, and looked pale.

"Why, what's the matter, Hannah? And what have you got on?"

"This is the frock I always wear in the evening."

It was a black frock, cut square at the throat, with a soft white tucker.

"I beg of you not to let me see you in it again. Such a style is not *comme il faut* for a child of your age. I wonder that there was not some one to manage better for you."

"Jane made it; Aunt Grace liked me to have my frocks cut square."

"Well, *Jane* ought to have known better, at any rate. It really seems to me to be high time that I came to make things straight in this house. To-morrow your wardrobe must be looked over. Really, if I had known what an ill-arranged establishment this was, I doubt if I should have left my home to come here. If you had met that lady

now, who has just gone, it would have been most annoying. Quite a *contretemps!*"

"What's that, Mrs. Hawksford?"

"My dear, do not ask so many questions. I thought you learned French at school; and you must not call me Mrs. Hawksford; it does not sound well. Cousin Ada is better, or Aunt Ada; you called Miss Tarne 'Aunt,' I believe?"

"Aunt Grace *was* my aunt. Shall I help the cutlets?"

"Yes, you can do that without spilling the gravy, I daresay. Dear me! I must have my plate chest unpacked. I cannot endure to see cutlets except on a silver dish. When my poor husband, the Captain, was alive, we always lived in such style. We were simple but stylish; here, there is such a lack of *ton.*"

Mrs. Hawksford turned and looked at the reflection of her fine figure in a glass that was at the top of the sideboard. She had on a tight-fitting black silk dress, and an arrangement of shining bugles round her neck; she had a handsome face with a Roman nose, and smooth black hair, which she wore in a coronet. She looked decidedly young for her years; the looking-glass reflected no wrinkles, and no gray hairs.

"Cousin Ada," said Mrs. Hawksford, meditatively; "*Cousin* Ada—perhaps that sounds as well. It would be absurd for me to have a nephew the

same age as myself. I must ask you, Hannah, to accustom yourself to address me as Cousin Ada!"

"Very well."

"I wish you would not be so short in your answers, Hannah; I make every allowance for you of course, and for your defective education, but still you must endeavour to be more companionable. What are you jumping up for?"

"I thought I heard the postman, Cousin—Cousin Ada."

"Wait until the servant brings the letters."

"Walter always sends me to the letter-box!"

"I daresay; gentlemen are different, and they all have their peculiarities. It is enough to ruin any establishment of servants to take their work out of their hands in that manner." Hannah sat silent; fortunately Jane brought in some letters for Mrs. Hawksford, which she immediately opened; and they kept her occupied till tea was over.

The evening was a very dreary one for Hannah; she was only too glad when, after an unsuccessful attempt to play her last new piece, Cousin Ada told her that she might take a book till bed-time.

Next day there were more alterations and more improvements; but Hannah had begun to get accustomed to hearing that everything was wrong, and as she was wholly indifferent to her personal appearance she did not mind when Cousin Ada began the threatened "overlooking" of her wardrobe.

Fortunately, too, she did not always understand Cousin Ada's long harangues; once or twice she burst out in defence of the old ways, but she had a shy horror of talking about Aunt Grace, and by degrees she even left off mentioning her name. "Cousin Ada doesn't understand," she said to herself; "I can't talk to her about things; it doesn't matter." The excitable little girl seemed to be changing her very nature; day by day she became more silent and spiritless. Even Jane grew concerned about her; she was quite relieved when Hannah came up to say that she was to go back to school at once—to the same school—because Walter wished it, but Cousin Ada had made an arrangement that she was to stay there all day, instead of coming home to dinner. The fact was that Mrs. Hawksford was beginning to find the supervision of this "odd little creature" rather a tax upon her time. She had come to London with great notions of reforming poor Walter Tarne's muddled affairs, but she never had the slightest intention of devoting herself exclusively to Hannah's education. She knew a good many people in town, and intended to know more; it would be decidedly *gêné* (as she expressed it) to be bound in the least degree to Hannah; not that she felt unkindly towards her; on the contrary, she had accepted her as part of the establishment which required reforming, but, on the other hand, she felt it to be a duty to herself not

to stay at home and mope, and a duty to her social circle to frequent any festivities that came in her way.

So it often happened that when Hannah came back from school she found a select tea-party going on in the drawing-room; and she would creep upstairs to Jane, and beg that she might have her tea in the workroom. If Mrs. Hawksford sent for her, which was often the case, she asked to be excused on the score of her lessons, which must be prepared by the next day. Of course she was never expected to appear at a dinner-party till the ladies came upstairs, and even then she tried her uttermost to invent excuses, but on this point Cousin Ada was firm. Hannah must come down and learn to be a little more *comme il faut* in her manners. So Hannah came and sat bolt upright on the edge of her chair, saying yes and no when any one spoke to her, and looking generally tired and invariably bored. Now and then the old free-spoken Hannah burst out, when any one talked to her about things that she understood and liked, and then she had a great deal to say, and forgot her company manners, but that was only now and then. On the whole, she had made up her mind that Cousin Ada's friends did not like her, and that she (more unfortunately still) did not like them, and this conviction went a long way towards making her stiff and awkward.

One evening, when the days were getting long,

Mrs. Hawksford sat writing letters at her shining black table. Hannah had a piece of needlework in her hand, but she had put it down, and was staring across the dusty road into the Park; how soon they got yellow, these London trees! a week's hot weather and they seem to shrivel up! A child in a perambulator was being pushed up and down the terrace; it felt the heat too, most likely, for it kept on crying in a peevish little voice. Hannah sighed; she was so sorry for the child, she would have liked to have jumped up and talked to it over the balcony railings, but she knew that would not be allowed. By and by, a lady came out of a house and talked to the child, and then the whole party walked across the road and into the Park. Hannah watched them; how well she knew that path! It led to the wooden seat, where she had met Ruth in the early spring. It seemed years and years ago; life is very long when one is so young; what an immense time it was since she had seen Ruth! Mrs. Penwarden had called at Victoria Terrace, but Hannah had always been at school; she had been asked to spend the evening at Highgate, but something had always happened to prevent her going, except on one occasion, when Cousin Ada had said that she might stay with her friends from Saturday to Monday.

"It really is provoking!" exclaimed Mrs. Hawksford, pushing back her writing-case; "the landlady

at Scarborough cannot take us in after all; and my plans are entirely upset for the summer!"

"What a pity, Cousin Ada!" said Hannah; "can't we go to another hotel?"

"Certainly not, Hannah; that is the sort of thing that it is impossible to make you comprehend. Here we were certain of meeting only the most select society, and at a strange hotel who knows what kind of *parvenus* one might have to associate with? I have an invitation to stay near Ryde, at a very pleasant house, but your name is not mentioned, Hannah; and I am the very last person in the world to drag forward my own relations, even with such intimate friends as Colonel and Mrs. Digby. No, I must refuse the invitation: I cannot neglect my duty."

Hannah had a dim recollection of Mrs. Digby—a pale lady in a fashionable bonnet—who had talked a good deal to Cousin Ada in a whisper when she was in the room. She didn't at all want to go to the pleasant house near Ryde, either with or without an invitation.

"Cousin Ada, can't you leave me here with Jane to take care of the house?"

"No, that would not look well, and I had thought of taking Jane with me; a maid is almost indispensable in an establishment of that description. By-the-bye, can we not induce the Penwardens to take charge of you for a few weeks? Mrs. Pen-

warden did tell me that she intended staying at home this summer."

Hannah jumped up from her chair. "That would be *the* most delightful plan in the world," she cried; "do let me write to Ruth this minute!"

"Take care, take care; you are so unguarded. Pray think of *les convenances.* That is not at all the manner in which affairs of this kind are managed."

"I don't see that there is any management wanted. They asked me to come whenever I might, and I *should* like it so much."

Mrs. Hawksford sat considering; she did not like things arranged in this off-hand fashion, but it would be a most convenient make-shift, and if Hannah had taken a fancy to this old lady and her invalid granddaughter, why, so much the better; it saved a great deal of trouble, and perhaps Scarborough later on might be rather bleak, and it would certainly be very expensive.

Hannah stood fidgeting from one foot to another. "Do be quick, Cousin Ada!"

"We will see; there is no immediate hurry; you are getting quite flurried, Hannah! I wonder what there is in that shabby old house at Hackney or Highgate (the names of suburbs always do escape my memory)—I wonder what it is that amuses you so there?"

"I don't know. I like it."

"Well, well, we will see. There is the gong. I had no idea it was six o'clock."

Three weeks later on, Mrs. Hawksford was on her way to the pleasant house at Ryde, and Ruth and Mrs. Penwarden were petting and making much of Hannah to their hearts' content. "She is growing such a tall girl," said Ruth; "if I had met this young lady in the Park five months ago, I should not have dared to speak to her."

"And she has grown thinner too," said Mrs. Penwarden; "have you been working too hard at school, my dear?"

They were sitting in the garden, in the shade of the wall that was covered with Virginian creepers; in the field, Hannah could see the sleepy cows lashing their long tails; and farther still was a nursery garden, with a little clump of fir trees standing like sentinels at the corner. One of the cows had a bell, and the faint tinkle sounded so deliciously countrified to Hannah's ears. She started when Mrs. Penwarden spoke to her.

"No, thank you. I haven't been working as hard as I should like. Cousin Ada doesn't let me sit up late to do my lessons."

"She is very right. When I was young all school-books were put away at twilight. No study was allowed by candlelight."

"You couldn't have done very much in the winter, dear Granny," observed Ruth.

"No, my dear child, I do not think that we did; but you must remember that there was no gas, and we had no moderator lamps, so we all sat round the table and did our sewing as best we could by the light of two candles. The silver candlesticks are upstairs in the drawing-room now."

"And you snuffed them with the asparagus tongs in that lovely little tray, didn't you?" asked Hannah.

"Yes, my dear; at least, if you mean the snuffers—asparagus tongs are quite a new fashion. I don't think that we suffered any inconvenience from candle-light, though I remember that the wicks were *rather* long sometimes before my mother considered that it was time to snuff them; it was a little duty that fell to my lot, as I was the youngest."

"I should have liked to do that," said Hannah.

"I daresay you would, only it was sometimes rather difficult to snuff them exactly the right length without putting them out altogether; and that very much annoyed my dear father, as he used to read a great deal in the evening. I don't think that the young people's eyesight is so good now as ours was."

Mrs. Penwarden had been a pretty brunette, and prided herself upon being able to see as far as ever without glasses,—"not but what Ruth has very good eyes," she added, stooping to pat her darling on the shoulder.

Hannah had a great deal to tell about the new

arrangements at home, but she did not seem to care to talk about it all at once: it was only by degrees that it came out, bit by bit.

"Jane thinks Cousin Ada is very strict," she said one day, when she and Ruth were alone; "but I don't mind that,—I am not a baby now,—only——" Hannah came closer to Ruth, as if there was comfort in being able to take hold of the hem of her dress, "I get so tired of everything being always new. Oh! I hope I shall be quick and grow up. I *am* trying to get on at school, and then perhaps Walter will let me keep house for him, and we can both forget Cousin Ada altogether. I should like her to have a nice little house in the Shetland Islands."

"My dearest Hannah!"

"I only mean that perhaps the steamers wouldn't be able to go there always. She should be very comfortable and happy, you know; only when it was rough, the letters couldn't go; and Cousin Ada does write such long letters; and it is rough up there pretty often. Do you know, Ruth, I had a long letter from her yesterday—crossed—and I haven't read it yet."

"You must let me read it for you; perhaps there is something important in it."

"No, there's not," said Hannah, shaking her head wisely; "because I read the first few sentences and the very end, and that's what Walter does when he gets a crossed letter. Oh! I hope

Cousin Ada will let me come and see you very often in the winter!"

Ruth took hold of Hannah's hand—she was kneeling now quite close to her. "My dear little girl," she said,—and she looked at the child with a world of tenderness in her lovely dark eyes,—"I have been wanting to tell you. . I am afraid you will be disappointed; I——"

"You are going to the Cape," burst out Hannah, "to that Mr. Penwarden. I hate it—oh! I hate him!"

"No, dear; don't say you hate him, or me either."

Hannah was clinging tight round Ruth's neck, hiding her flushed cheeks on her shoulder; "I didn't, I didn't," she murmured.

"I am not going to the Cape, Hannah, but we think—Granny is so anxious, and Highgate is very cold; so we are going to the south of France for the winter."

Hannah lifted up her head. For one second Jane's story of the doctors and Miss Penwarden's health darted through her brain; but she had made up her mind long ago that that was only gossip, like the lions and tigers; then Ruth did not seem ill; she had a lovely pink colour, and she never complained. "Only to France," she said at last; "it might have been much worse. And will you come back quite well and strong?"

Granny hopes so, and the doctor wishes me to

go. I am sorry—more sorry than I can say—to leave you."

"Don't be sorry, dear, dearest Ruth. It's not half so bad as if you were going to the Cape for always, and I shall write to you very often. I don't think Cousin Ada *can* mind that. And then, by the time you come back, I shall be much nearer being grown up. Don't mind my having said I hated Mr. James Penwarden; indeed I don't now; I will be very good as long as I may love you!"

On the whole, the winter passed quickly and happily for Hannah Tarne, though she was left a great deal to herself. Cousin Ada had taken to singing-classes and china-painting; and what with her large correspondence and her housekeeping duties, she had very little time left, as she said, to be with Hannah.

At Christmas there were a few parties to which Cousin Ada took Hannah, in a short dress, with her hair plaited into a pig-tail and tied with ribbon. "You may go if you like, Hannah," she said on one of these occasions, "but it must be quite *à l'enfant.*" Hannah did not mind at all; she would just as soon have stayed at home; but when she got to the party, she found some shy children who wanted amusing, and in looking after them she was very happy herself. Jane was pleased; she considered that it was high time that the child thought of something

beyond her lesson-books; indeed, she even went the length of telling Mrs. Hawksford that she considered Miss Hannah to be much improved in her ways, and needed a little pleasure. Mrs. Hawksford put up with a good deal from Jane, as an old servant, and such a firstrate milliner and hairdresser; so she smiled graciously at this announcement, and said that she was not surprised to hear it. She never *was* surprised to hear anything that she deemed creditable to her own good management. In the meantime, Hannah, quite unconscious of the praise that was being bestowed on her, was trying with all her might and main to do what she was told, and to learn to be thoughtful for other people, like Ruth; perhaps *then*, Walter would be satisfied with her when he came home. She worked harder than ever at school, and even got up an hour earlier than usual to practise. Ruth would be so pleased if she got on with her music. She went singing about the house, and volunteered to help Cousin Ada finish an elaborate piece of crewel-work for the boudoir table,—an æsthetic device, representing small croquet balls and clover leaves, which went by the name of pomegranate sprays.

Every fortnight, or sometimes oftener, Hannah had a letter from France, and the Saturday afternoon, when she was free to write her answer, was the great treat that she looked forward to all the week. About the end of February the letters

stopped coming. At first Hannah did not distress herself about it; she gladly listened to Jane, who said that, to be sure, the ladies had gone for a journey; and when you were travelling it was impossible to be always sending letters, especially in foreign countries, where the post-office might be quite different from ours. Every morning, however, Hannah asked the same question, and every afternoon, when she returned from school, she whispered, "Has it come, Jane?" for it was one of Cousin Ada's whims that she could not endure Hannah's habit of fixing her mind on any one subject, and moping away her time; a young girl of her age ought to be cheerful and gay!

"Here, Miss Hannah, here it is!" said Jane, as she opened the street door; "Mrs. Hawksford is out. Take it upstairs to your room, and see how foolish it was to worry yourself. It's all right, I'll be bound."

Hannah tore open the letter, not waiting to listen to Jane's observations. Only a few lines, after all, hurriedly written by Mrs. Penwarden, to say that her darling Ruth had been very ill, but now they thought she was a little better, and they hoped to travel homewards slowly in April. Hannah was not to trouble if she did not hear again, there was so much to do. Ruth sent her dearest love.

Ruth was coming home! Home in April! That was the one thought that filled little Hannah's

mind; she was better, much better, and she was coming home! It was March now; in four weeks time, or perhaps sooner, Ruth would be back at Highgate. She rushed downstairs to meet Jane, and flung her arms round her, exclaiming: "She is better, and she is really, really coming home next month!" Jane read the letter which Hannah put into her hand, and for once refrained from speaking her mind and saying what her opinion was.

March came to an end, the first week in April, the second week. The weather was wonderfully mild for the time of year, and people began to talk about an old-fashioned early spring. One warm day, Mrs. Hawksford came in, and found Hannah in the drawing-room.

"By-the-bye," she said, "you will want some new clothes, it is getting too warm for you to wear that thick dress. Is to-morrow your half-holiday?"

"Yes, Cousin Ada; do you want me for anything?"

"Of course I do, Hannah; I must take you to get a spring jacket, and see about some light material for a dress. I suppose you need not wear black any longer. I must speak to Jane; really my time is so taken up since I came to this house that I hardly have a moment to call my own. I must go up to Highgate and call too; it is so tiresome of people to live such a long way off! That reminds me—you know, Hannah, I suppose, that the Penwardens have come back?"

"Have they? Oh, Cousin Ada, when did they come? How is Ruth? Why didn't they write and tell me?"

"I should think Mrs. Penwarden had enough to do without writing to you. It was a most ill-advised thing, that journey to the south of France, (in their straitened circumstances too). If Mrs. Penwarden had asked me, I could have told her of a dozen cases where it has done no good. The doctors must say something."

"Is Ruth *still* ill?" asked Hannah.

"Of course she is; why, Mrs. Acton has just been telling me that they hardly thought she would have lived to come home. Mrs. Acton is quite upset about it, though really for the sake of the relatives, as well as the poor girl herself, one can hardly wish that she should——"

Mrs. Hawksford finished her sentence to herself. Hannah went slowly out of the room, with a set white face of despair. It had come upon her so unexpectedly, this cruel blow! This was a thousand times worse than anything she had dreaded, a thousand times worse than Ruth's going to the Cape. Was it true? Did Mrs. Acton know anything about it? Did Cousin Ada know? She didn't care. Hannah leant her head against the window and stared out, without seeing anything. Was *this* the reason that Mrs. Penwarden had not written again? She must know all about it; she

must go up to Highgate and see if it was true; only to see Ruth once more, only once more! Some one came to the door. It was Mrs. Hawksford. "Now, Hannah," she said, "I do beg that you will not take to fretting in this manner; as I have told you before, it is all for the best, and Mrs. Acton——"

"Cousin Ada,"—Hannah's voice sounded hollow and unnatural even to herself,—"do let me go to Highgate now, and see how Ruth is! It can't, it can't be true."

"How can you ask such a thing, Hannah? It is past five o'clock; who is to take you to Highgate? If you are a sensible girl, you shall go with me when I call to inquire next week. We will have a fly and drive over comfortably. The drive will do me good."

"If I can't go to-night, may Jane go with me to-morrow?"

"You are going to-morrow to have your spring jacket tried on; you would only be in the way at Highgate."

"I am *never* in the way at Highgate."

"Very well, Hannah; if you are going to argue in this way, it is of no use talking to you any longer. Most girls of your age would be pleased to be taken out shopping, instead of behaving like a spoilt baby."

"I don't want a new jacket; only do let me go and see how Ruth is."

"It is very ungrateful of you, Hannah, and not at all what your brother Walter would expect of you."

"Walter would let me go. I'm sure he would!"

"I hope you will come down to tea in a better frame of mind; I cannot stay to argue with you any longer."

As the door shut behind Mrs. Hawksford, Hannah flung herself full-length on the floor. "What shall I do?" she sobbed; "what shall I do? Ruth, I cannot live without you!"

Hannah came down to tea, silent and miserable. No more was said on the subject of going to Highgate; and Mrs. Hawksford took it for granted that the child would soon forget her foolish wish.

When school was over next day, Hannah put her books to rights in a great hurry, and came away, hardly stopping to say "good-bye" to her companions. Instead of walking home across the Park, she turned into a side street and jumped into the first cab she met.

"Where to, Miss?" asked the man.

"To the nearest general post-office."

He shut the door, and Hannah was left alone in the cab with a beating heart. In her hand, quite tight, she held her purse with all her savings—half a sovereign and some shillings and sixpences. She had made up her mind that she would telegraph to Walter; she was sure he would say that she might

go to Highgate, and then Cousin Ada could not make any more objections. How fortunate that Walter had said in his last letter that he expected to be at Aden in the middle of April; perhaps he would send her an answer at once; she hoped he would not be angry if it cost a great deal of money; perhaps she would be able to pay for the answer back herself. There was a great deal of bustle at the post-office, and Hannah had to wait some time before she could get attended to.

"Please, can I telegraph to——"

"You will find a form, pen, and ink, at the side," said the clerk, without looking up.

Hannah went to the side as she was told; she knew exactly what she meant to say. "May I go and see Ruth; she is ill." That was as short as she could make the message, but she did not at all understand what she was to do with a form.

A gentleman was writing on a piece of paper; he seemed to be (like all the other people) in a great hurry, but he stopped to look at Hannah, it was so very evident that she wanted a little assistance. He had on a rough loose coat and a blue shirt; his face was burnt brown, and so were his long thin hands. He was decidedly an ugly man, with reddish hair; he looked very grave and somehow, out of place among the bustling people. He had a kind voice, and such friendly eyes that

Hannah did not feel at all afraid, when he asked if he could do anything to help her.

"I want to find out, please, how much it costs to telegraph to Aden."

"To Aden? I think it is three shillings a word, but I'll just inquire to be quite sure. Have you got your telegram written out?"

"Yes. I mean, no! Not on a form," stammered Hannah; "but if it costs as much as that, I don't think it's any use your troubling."

"It is no trouble at all, but didn't you know that it was an expensive thing to telegraph so far?"

"I thought it would be, but not so much as *that.* I brought as much money as I've got—thirteen shillings and eightpence, and I must pay the cab."

"I am afraid that will not be enough," said the gentleman very kindly, "because you would have to pay for the address too, and you can hardly telegraph less than three words. Didn't your—your friends——" He hesitated and looked at Hannah again.

"No," she answered; "my friends don't know anything about it. I am very sorry, but I shall have to write instead."

"That will be the best thing you can do, if your message is not very important."

"It is important to *me,*" said Hannah, glancing up at her champion. She could not help seeing that in spite of his friendliness he was looking just a

little bit amused. Then it flashed upon her that she was wasting her time and doing no good; it would be wiser to go home and consult Jane. She began to wish that she had done so at first.

"I think I had better go now," she said.

"Will you allow me to arrange it for you?" asked the gentleman, looking quite grave and serious.

"Do you mean that you will pay the rest of the money?"

He smiled. "Yes, perhaps it will not be so much as we think, or you might make your message a little shorter."

For one moment Hannah stood looking undecided; she felt the scrap of paper in her pocket, on which she had scribbled her telegram. If she only dared—but then the thought that Cousin Ada would be sure to hear of it sooner or later—that Jane would be terribly shocked—came uppermost. Something must be settled at once; the white-faced clock over the fireplace was pointing to one o'clock, and she knew she must be home in half an hour.

"No, I can't!" she said at last, with a little gasp of disappointment; "they wouldn't let me, and I should *never* be able to pay you back."

The gentleman helped Hannah into the cab, and shut the door for her. She had got half-way to the Park gate before she remembered that she had quite forgotten to thank him for his kindness.

This little expedition had done Hannah good;

she was obliged to run across the Park in order to be in time for dinner. She was very much relieved to find that Cousin Ada had gone to call on Mrs. Digby (who had unexpectedly come to town), and had left a message to say that the purchase of the spring jacket must be put off till another day. Jane was out too, so Hannah had no one to speak to. She ate her dinner in a hurry,—she was not at all hungry,—and then took a book; but it was no use, the book did not interest her at all; she turned over one leaf after another, and at last put it down with a sigh. "I wonder," she thought, "why they don't write to me! I wonder whether Mrs. Acton knows how Ruth is!"

She rang the bell, and waited impatiently till the housemaid appeared. In the old days she would have run to the top of the kitchen stairs and called over, but that was one of the numerous things that Cousin Ada had strictly forbidden, as being the sure way to ruin the servants of any establishment.

"Do you know when Jane will be in?"

"Not till late, Miss; she has gone home."

"Thank you," said Hannah; "I am going out a little: I wanted to know if Jane would be in first."

The housemaid shut the window, and put an antimacassar straight that had got pushed awry.

"It is a beautiful afternoon for a walk, Miss," she said; "is there anything I can do for you?"

"No, nothing, thank you."

Hannah sat down to the writing-table, and the housemaid went away.

"My dear Cousin Ada," wrote Hannah on a sheet of the best stamped writing-paper, which she was never allowed to touch, "I am going to Mrs. Acton's to see if she will tell me how Ruth is. I can't tell you how much I want to know. Jane is out, but I know my way to Highgate. Indeed I should not go when you were out, but I must.—Yours affectionately, HANNAH.

"I am so sorry I was ungrateful about the jacket."

This letter was folded up and put on the table, where Mrs. Hawksford would be sure to see it when she came in. Then Hannah dressed, and went out; a carriage was turning the corner of the terrace; the lady inside nodded kindly to her—it was Mrs. Acton.

"It's no use my going there to ask," said Hannah to herself; "I shall go on to Highgate before it gets too late. I'm sure Walter would let me if he knew. I wish I had let that gentleman telegraph for me."

Hannah was not the least anxious about going to Highgate alone; she had been there before in the tramway; she had satisfied her conscientious scruples by writing to Cousin Ada, and now her one idea and thought was to get to Ruth's as quickly as possible.

CHAPTER III.

THE pretty drawing-room at Highgate looked strange and unlived-in; the piano was covered up, and the chairs stood in straight rows against the walls; there were no flowers in the vases, and no signs of needle-work about. A young man, with a quick, light step, was walking up and down the room from one end to the other; he started as the door opened, and Mrs. Penwarden came in.

"How is she now, aunt?"

"Quite quiet, dear Jim, and resting. She is only anxious about that little girl, Hannah Tarne. We wrote to you about her, she is a poor little motherless child that we took a great fancy to. I want you to leave this letter for me; it is to Mrs. Hawksford, the lady who takes charge of her; she is a curious woman, and might be offended if I wrote to the child. I want her to come here to-morrow. Can you manage it for me?"

"Yes, give it to me, dear aunt. Surely there must be something else I can do for you; it's a kindness to give me something to do."

"My dear boy," said Mrs. Penwarden, "we can do nothing else. I do thank God that you were able to come in time, and we have a great deal to be thankful for. She is quite happy."

When James Penwarden returned from Victoria Terrace an hour or so later, he opened the street door with his latch-key and shut it again carefully; his foot was on the staircase when he stopped suddenly. Surely somebody was in the passage? Yes! there was a light in the empty library. The light turned out to be a candle which had been left on the floor, and was guttered on one side with the draught. At the farther end of the room, screwed up behind an old bookcase, with her head against the wainscot, was a little girl in a black frock. She was asleep, and apparently very unhappy, for she drew her breath in long sobs. As Jim held the candle and came towards her, Hannah opened her eyes and sat up.

"What is it?" she asked; then looking at him eagerly, "Did you telegraph to Aden?"

As she said it he recognised the sad little face that had looked at him so wistfully in the morning. "Never mind about the telegram. I am grieved to find you here alone; let me take you up to the fire."

Hannah was wide awake now. "How do you come to be here?" she asked; "they said the doctor had gone."

"But I am not the Doctor. I daresay you have heard Ruth speak of her cousins at the Cape. My name is James Penwarden, and I only came home yesterday. I was telegraphing for Aunt Rachel when I met you at the post-office this morning."

"I'm sorry," said Hannah, "I never thanked you for helping me. I forgot; it was not because I didn't know you were Ruth's cousin."

"Well, now you do know, you must do as I ask you. How cold you are!"

"Yes," said Hannah, and shivered; she let him take her upstairs into the drawing-room without another word.

"Do you know," he said, "that Ruth has been asking for you? How long have you been here?"

"I'm not sure. A very long time. I could not find Mrs. Penwarden, so I went into the library to be out of the way. May I see Ruth?"

Mr. Penwarden lighted a candle. Hannah stood staring at him; he looked sad and tired, but it was the same kind face with the friendly eyes that had won her confidence in the morning.

"I think you had better sit down and rest, Hannah. That is your name, isn't it?" She nodded. "I will let Aunt Rachel know that you are here; she will think that I brought you back."

"Where from?"

"From Victoria Terrace. I have been there to see about your coming, but Mrs. Hawksford was out."

"Perhaps she won't be back till to-morrow, but I wrote a letter."

"Did you? The servants, one of them particularly, seemed to be very anxious about you."

"It must have been Jane," said Hannah; "I'm sorry; but I was obliged to come. Oh! I hope Mrs. Penwarden won't be angry!" She jumped up now from her low seat, and put her hand entreatingly on his arm.

"No, no," he said in an odd, broken voice.

"If I may see her once now, I will not tease any more about it till she gets better. Indeed I won't!"

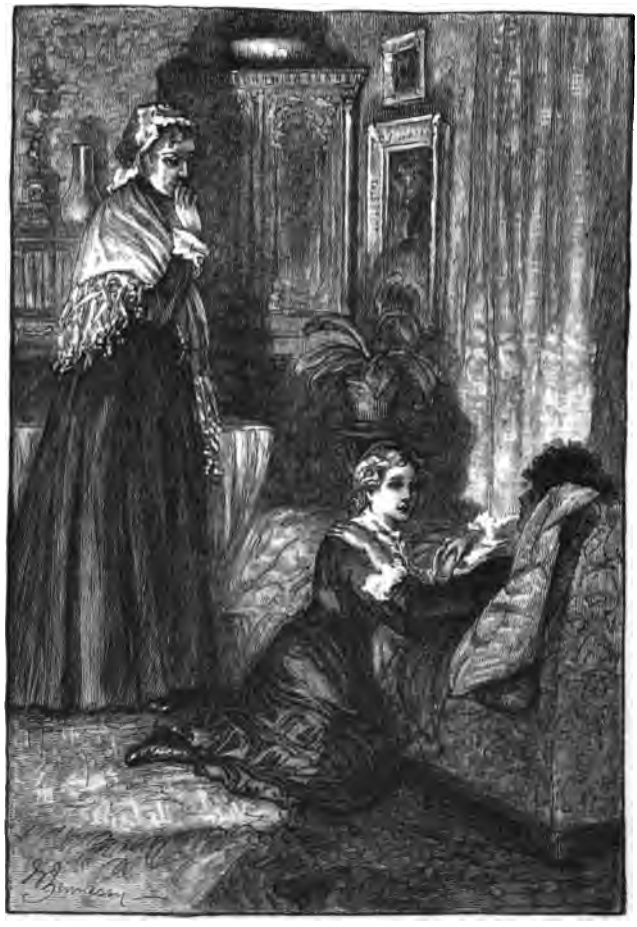
Mr. Penwarden left the room; in a very few minutes he was back again.

"Go up at once, Hannah," he said; "you will find Mrs. Penwarden waiting for you."

On tip-toe, Hannah stole out of the room; she met Mrs. Penwarden on the landing. "My dear Hannah," she whispered, "Ruth has been talking about you; I have just sent to beg you to come and see her. Did Mrs. Hawksford send you up?"

Hannah shook her head. "I heard—Mrs. Acton said that she was so ill, and I came by myself. Dear Mrs. Penwarden, *do* let me see her."

"I am truly glad that you have come, my dear child; go into my room and take your things off. I will tell her that you are here; you must be very quiet, and only stay for a few minutes."



"Little Hannah, I have so longed to see you."—P. 67.

Hannah promised; she took off her hat and jacket as she had been told, and smoothed her hair. How strange and white she looked in the long glass; and she had forgotten to put on her brooch. She felt for a pin in Mrs. Penwarden's pincushion, and tried to make her tucker tidy; then she sat down on a stool by the window and waited. At last the door was opened, and a curtain was pushed aside: "Come in," said a low voice; and Hannah went.

There was a shaded lamp on a little table, and the firelight flickered across the walls of the room, dancing on the furniture and on the gilded frames of the pictures that Hannah knew so well. How many happy hours she had spent in that morning room! She knew the name of every book in the bookcase, each chip and crack in the old china on the mantelpiece. But now, she had no thought for bygone things or the old days; on a sofa, screened from the draught and supported by pillows, lay Ruth; her beautiful hair was ruffled and disordered, and her lovely eyes were turned towards the child. She held out her hand.

"Let her come, dear Granny," she said. "Little Hannah, I have so longed to see you."

Hannah crept noiselessly across the room; she had promised to be quiet, she did not want to scream or cry now: here was Ruth, with the same sweet face and smile. She came up to the side of

the sofa, and knelt down; she had got all that she wanted.

"Darling," she whispered, "I am so glad I came. I thought of you all day long, and yesterday—and then I couldn't stay away any longer."

"I told Granny I wanted you. We have been great friends, dear; I used to think I should so like to have a little sister; and even that has come to me. And Jim is here; he will be good to you. If I could, I would have helped you more."

"I love you; oh! I love you; you have done everything for me."

There was a moment's pause. Hannah could hear the ticking of the clock in the passage; no other sound. Then some one came towards them. "Let her stay, please, nurse; I like to have her."

Hannah came closer to Ruth, and the nurse retired. Presently Ruth spoke again.

"How long is it, Hannah, since I found you in the Park?"

"More than a year."

"It seems much longer," said Ruth, taking Hannah's plump little hand between her thin white fingers; "it has always made me happy to have you with me. Put your arms round my neck, and say good-night!"

"Good-night, dear Ruth," whispered Hannah.

"I hope you will often come to see Granny. You will be a brave girl about home troubles?"

"I will try."

"That's right. God bless my darling Hannah! Kiss me again, dear; good-night."

One long kiss, and Hannah, obedient to the last, took the nurse's hand, and went quietly out of the room. Here, all her grief burst forth afresh. "Is she so very ill?" she sobbed out to Jim Penwarden, who was still walking wearily up and down the drawing-room; "and will you send for me when I may see her again?"

Jim hardly knew what to answer; he did not dare to tell the child the truth. "I will come myself, and tell you how she is to-morrow," he said at last.

"Yes; she said you would be good to me, though I usen't to think so. And you won't forget? Perhaps I might see her next week."

Never again, little Hannah, never again; God, in His wisdom and lovingkindness, is taking Ruth home to His eternal kingdom, and you will not see her again till you meet where there is no more death or sorrow or crying. The friends had parted. For the passionate, loving child, there was perhaps a long lifetime in store—years through which she must struggle and fight to the end, making countless failures, meeting many troubles, and joyfully hailing many blessings. Who knows? And Ruth? Before the end of the week came the tidings that she had entered into rest.

For many days after her stolen visit to the old house at Highgate, Hannah was kept at home with a bad feverish cold. She had got a chill, they said, sleeping in the empty library—it must have been damp. Every one was kind to her; the Doctor came, and made little jokes about the doll's house and the toys with which the mantelpiece was crowded; Mrs. Acton called, and brought bunches of lovely spring flowers; even Mrs. Penwarden came (after a time) to inquire after her little friend; and Jane was unceasing in her efforts to do everything she could for the child's comfort. Mrs. Hawksford brought her work and sat in Hannah's room, at the risk, she said, of injuring her own health; she ordered jellies and beef-tea enough for several starving people, and then complained, when they were sent away almost untouched, that Hannah took no pains to shake off her cold and get strong. "It is a sad return for all my care of her," she observed to her friend Mrs. Digby, one afternoon when Hannah had come in from her first drive, tired and listless—"after all the trouble and expense to which I have been put: giving up my house, and dismissing my establishment, in order to secure a comfortable home for my cousin's sister (she is really no relation to me),—that it should end, so to speak, in my being literally shut up in a sick-room! Dear Mrs. Digby, I feel that my energies are being wasted."

Mrs. Hawksford, when she once got fairly started on the subject of her own grievences, had a pleasing knack of forgetting that she had let her cottage at the sea-side to a very eligible tenant; that she was living rent-free at Victoria Terrace; also that Walter Tarne allowed her a handsome income for the education of his sister and the defraying of household expenses.

Mrs. Digby, who knew very little of her friend's private affairs, but admired her as a sensible, active woman, murmured a sympathetic, "Yes, to be sure; but is the little girl really so delicate? I did not think so when I saw her before."

"The real fact of the matter is that she was (most unwisely I consider) allowed to make the acquaintance of some friends of Mrs. Acton's—the Penwardens; I mentioned it to you before, and how Hannah went up there without leave the day I called upon you. And now the mischief is done; she does nothing but fret about Miss Penwarden, and the only person she seems at all pleased to see, is an outlandish-looking relation of the Penwardens, who comes to call two or three times a week, making Hannah think she is really an invalid. He will stay for half an hour, sometimes, hardly speaking a word, and looking as if he were longing to return to his back-woods. I am sure I wish he would do so."

"Very trying, to be sure," said Mrs. Digby. She

was a mild-looking, indolent woman, with fair hair and eyebrows and colourless eyes, who, from long experience, had arrived at the conclusion, that a great deal of trouble was saved by agreeing with people (at least to their faces), and acted accordingly. "Are they connected with the Penwardens of Cape Town?"

"Yes; that is to say, this Mr. Penwarden has something to do with a firm out there—the name has escaped my memory. The head partner is his uncle."

"If they are the people that I have heard the Colonel mention, it is a good thing for the young man. It is a very prosperous concern I am told. But about Hannah, suppose you bring her down to us for change of air? The country looks really charming at this time of year, and there is likely to be a good deal going on, in our set. It will be a change for you also, so overdone as you are."

"You are very good. It is *the* thing of all others that I should most enjoy; it quite puts new life into one to meet old friends; I am *désolée* in town at times, I do assure you."

"Poor dear Mrs. Hawksford!" said Mrs. Digby. "Well, we will consider that settled, and the Colonel will be delighted."

"It is fortunate," observed Mrs. Hawksford, "that I expect Dr. Burton almost immediately. He is a man in whom I have not much faith,—quite a

pessimist,—but Walter Tarne has known him for many years; he attended his poor aunt, I believe, in her last illness. A most ill-advised person, Miss Tarne was, and did her utmost to spoil her niece and ruin her nephew with extravagance. Would you believe it, the last cook actually told me that the servants were allowed fires in their bedrooms, during the severe frost. *Quelle idée!*"

"Your reforming spirit *must* be a boon in such a family; you have such real energy of character! The Colonel invariably says——"

Dr. Burton was announced.

"Send for Miss Hannah," said Mrs. Hawksford to the servant, and straightway introduced Dr. Burton to Mrs. Digby, as an old and valued friend of the family. In her heart, she stood in some awe of the little Doctor; he had a knack of screwing up his eyebrows, and making jokes that she could not grasp the meaning of; so she put him down as an original, who was to be treated with a certain amount of respect, though she inwardly disliked him, and considered that he was one of the many people who seemed to take delight in throwing obstacles in the thorny path of her duty, as Hannah's temporary guardian.

"How is my young patient?" asked the Doctor.

"Progressing fast under your care, Dr. Burton."

The Doctor bowed, which was embarrassing; but Mrs. Hawksford went on: "She has been out to-day,

and I have just received a delightful invitation from Mrs. Digby for her to go to the sea-side and recruit her strength."

"The very thing!" said the Doctor. "Here is the young lady; she can answer for herself."

Hannah came in, stiff and shy; she gave her hand to Mrs. Digby in an awkward manner, and then sat down on the very edge of the chair that the Doctor placed for her.

"Well, my dear, how are you to-day?"

"Quite well, thank you."

"Then you don't want me here any more, that is evident," said Dr. Burton, whereupon Mrs. Hawksford began making apologies for Hannah's *gaucherie.*

"You know I don't mean that," said Hannah—she and the Doctor were old friends,—"I am very glad to see you."

"That's right. Now tell me if you would like to go to the sea-side for a month?"

Hannah's pale face crimsoned with pleasure. "Immensely! Oh, Cousin Ada, are you really going to let me go to Yarmouth? I thought you said it was too cold."

"So I did, Hannah," said Mrs. Hawksford, turning towards Mrs. Digby; "and I have accepted Mrs. Digby's kind invitation for you to go to Ryde."

"I shall hope to see you both very shortly," said Mrs. Digby.

"But—but, Cousin Ada," stammered Hannah, "I would rather go to Yarmouth."

"Hannah!" exclaimed Mrs. Hawksford; "have you nothing else to say? Cannot you even thank Mrs. Digby?"

Hannah hung her head, and muttered something that sounded like "Thank you very much, but I'd rather not."

Mrs. Digby had been occupied in pretending to smell an ostentatiously-artificial lily in a blue Japanese pot. She was not fond of children—at least, unless they were pretty and engaging, and did not appear too often in the drawing-room; and of all things, she hated a scene; so she smiled and looked towards the doctor, who was rapping out a tune with the tips of his fingers, on the back of a chair.

"We must appeal to you, Dr. Burton. Which place do you recommend for your patient?"

"In a case of this kind, my dear madam, it is naturally bracing air which is required" (the doctor paused, and looked at Cousin Ada from under his shaggy eyebrows). "Mrs. Hawksford will agree with me that the east coast will be the best thing that we can do for Hannah at present. As for Ryde, it is a charming spot, as you say, but enervating. It will not do, I am afraid."

"But, Dr. Burton," remonstrated Mrs. Hawksford, "I can hardly send Hannah to a comparative stranger by herself, in her ailing state of health."

"Do not distress yourself; she will be all right in a few days. But if you are over-anxious, send Jane; she is steady enough. I should pack them off as soon as possible—to-morrow or the next day. Let me know when it is settled, and I will come in and see the little invalid before she starts. Good-afternoon, ladies. Good-bye, Miss Hannah. You may leave off your tonic very soon; and, by-the-bye, are you fond of donkey-riding?"

"I am *much* too old to ride a donkey," said Hannah indignantly.

"Oh, I beg your pardon. I am told there are excellent donkeys at Yarmouth. I should think one could be found strong enough to carry you; I should recommend you to ask; say that you are acting under medical advice, and there will be a dozen at your disposal immediately! Good-bye to you."

Doctor Burton was gone. Hannah went upstairs to her tea, and the two ladies were left alone to make their remarks on the extreme roughness of this diamond of a doctor. Anyhow, he had settled the question; it would never do to fly in the face of his express orders; and Hannah (under the charge of Jane) was sent to Yarmouth the following day.

To tell the truth, it was a great relief to Mrs. Hawksford to be left to her own devices—either to accept Mrs. Digby's invitation, or to enjoy herself in the society of her special set in London. She

had a regard for Hannah after her fashion; that is to say, she liked to have a vocation, or rather a grievance; and the care of a neglected schoolgirl appeared to her a very substantial one. As long as Hannah looked well, and was regularly employed at her studies, Mrs. Hawksford was satisfied; but a drooping, sickly *protegée,* about whom people had already begun to talk—that was quite another question! No! Mrs. Hawksford's ideal of a young girl was something lively—amiable, but decidedly lively—*spirituelle* she would have called it; and poor Hannah fell far short of the mark. It was gratifying to know (though she had opposed the scheme at first) that the Dodds were homely people, who, at any rate, would not put any sentimental notions into Hannah's head; though, on the other hand, she was not likely to return improved in manner or style. Cousin Ada consequently made up her mind that she would dismiss all anxiety from the scene; she posted it, in short, with her fortnightly letter to Walter Tarne: "As I told you before, Hannah continues to be in very indifferent health. I have, however, according to your wish expressed before leaving, placed her unconditionally in the hands of our old friend Dr. Burton. He talks of a chill and a shock; and though I apprehend no serious result from her temporary indisposition, I cannot but regret that she disobeyed my orders in going to Highgate during the illness of Miss Penwarden.

However, as you know, I make every allowance for *une enfant gâtée.* Hannah is at present with the Dodds at Yarmouth. I had proposed taking her myself to Ryde for a little change, but Dr. Burton being strongly in favour of the former arrangement, I naturally waived my own wish to his experience."

Hannah rapidly gained health and strength. Mrs. Dodd was a kind, motherly woman, who had inspired her daughters (two shy, good-tempered girls) with the notion that their poor little orphan cousin was to be given way to in everything. Indeed, she would willingly have kept her altogether, if Walter Tarne had not objected to the plan, because he would then have been obliged to give up the house in Victoria Terrace. I am afraid, that if Mrs. Hawksford regarded Mrs. Dodd as a countrified person without *ton,* that Mrs. Dodd, from her side, considered Mrs. Hawksford to be a very fine lady, bent on pursuing her own pleasure at all risks, and not to be mentioned in the same breath with poor Grace Tarne. She determined that, at all events, for the next week or so, Hannah should do as she liked, and enjoy herself with her cousins. To the child it was delightful to be left alone; to be allowed to wander about on the sea-shore for hours, while Jane did needlework under the shade of a green umbrella; and to find her cousins always willing to walk, or read, or talk, just as she chose. Mrs. Dodd never scolded when her young visitor

came in late for dinner, with a torn frock and rumpled hair, and she asked no questions about the black-edged letters that Hannah sent to the post, and which at first cost her many tears. It was like a return to the old life with Aunt Grace, when Walter was away, and no one dreamt of Cousin Ada's existence. One afternoon, Hannah was sitting with Mrs. Dodd, when a card was brought in: a gentleman had called to see Miss Tarne.

"Who can this be, Hannah, dear?" asked Mrs. Dodd, fumbling for her spectacles; "surely not Dr. Burton come down to see you. Well, if it is, he will be pleased with the improvement in your looks, I am sure. 'Mr. Penwarden.' Would you like to see him, Hannah?"

"Yes, very much; he is a great friend of mine. May I go and bring him up?"

"If you like, dear."

It never occurred to simple Mrs. Dodd that the habit of doing things for herself was derogatory to the dignity of a young lady in Hannah's position; she was only too pleased to see the child's happy face as she led Mr. Penwarden into the room, exclaiming triumphantly, "Here he is, Aunt Dodd; this is Mr. Penwarden."

"I must apologise for taking you by storm in this unceremonious fashion," began Jim. "I am only here for a few days, and I heard from my aunt, that Hannah was staying with you."

"I am delighted to have the pleasure of making your acquaintance. My little cousin has often spoken to me of you and Mrs. Penwarden; I hope she is well."

"Thank you; she is better, but terribly broken down by her great trouble."

James Penwarden had an open, frank face that seemed to invite sympathy, and the quiver in his voice as he mentioned the great trouble went straight to Mrs. Dodd's heart.

"Poor thing," she said, "poor thing! But now, Mr. Penwarden, you will stay and dine with us, I hope?"

Jim regretted that he had promised to dine with a friend, but might he take Hannah for a walk?—it would be his last chance for a long time.

It was scarcely necessary to ask for permission. Hannah was sent to put her hat on as quickly as possible. Jane, who was seated at the window looking over the road to the sea, watched Hannah's eager face as she trotted along by the side of her tall companion. "She is certainly a different young lady to what she is at Victoria Terrace; nobody would believe it was the same child. In my opinion, there's somebody not many miles from here who does better by Miss Hannah than ever Mrs. Hawksford will do, for all the Captain sets such store on what she thinks! Not that *I* have to complain; it's a comfortable place for me, and them

that imagines they rule with ever such a high hand are sometimes mistaken!"

The housemaid, who was young and inexperienced, looked mystified at this harangue,—as perhaps Jane intended that she should,—and went away much impressed to ask the under-gardener what *he* thought on the subject.

"It's quite a treat to see you looking so brown and well, Hannah," said Jim; "Aunt Rachel will be delighted when she hears it."

"Tell me a great deal about her, please. Has she gone away from Highgate yet?"

"No, and I don't think she will be persuaded to go. A friend of hers is coming to stay with her, and I don't think she will return with me, though my mother wishes it."

Hannah heaved a sigh; it had never entered her head that it would be possible for Mrs. Penwarden to undertake such a long journey as that. "I hope you won't go back for a long, long time."

"Indeed I am obliged to, Hannah. I only came over because—because of Ruth's illness. My time is up next week."

"I am *so* sorry; and I used to hope you would never come. I thought you might take Ruth away, I said I hated you once."

"Never mind about that now," said Jim, very kindly. He could not tell the child of his own dream—how, with tender care, Ruth might recover

enough to go out to the Cape, and regain her health in the beautiful climate. So many years he had worked for this one object—the hope of persuading her to renew their broken engagement—all in vain! He had come in time,—just in time to see her again, —and now it was all over.

"I do love her very much," said the child, "though Cousin Ada doesn't like me to talk about her; and I know she loved you too. I used to think she wanted you to come home very much. Mr. Penwarden!"

"Yes, Hannah."

"I wish you would take me to the Cape with you."

"My dear child! I'm afraid that's impossible. What would your brother do without you, and Cousin Ada?"

"I've thought about that too. Aunt Dodd thinks Walter will marry Cousin Ada; I heard her talking to Jane about it last night, so it's no use my growing up quick to keep house for him; is it?"

This was said in a grave, simple manner, Hannah was not complaining, only stating the facts.

"They would not like to part with you for all that. If my mother had a little daughter, do you think she would send her away to the other end of the world?"

"I should like to know your mother, though

perhaps I should be in her way; and perhaps I should be in your way too, if you took me with you? When I am grown up, I shall be less trouble."

"I don't think your friends find you much trouble now," said Jim, smiling.

"But I am sometimes, though I *do* try to be good and to be like Ruth. I shan't forget you either; she never did."

"Will you promise that you won't forget me directly after I am gone?"

"Yes, I promise you faithfully."

They were walking along by the edge of the sea, and the white crested waves came rolling in at their feet; the sun shone on the dark red sail of a little fishing boat that was making straight for shore. To Hannah the whole scene was one of rest and peace; those crested breakers brought no thought of storms and journeys and partings; she saw only the blue water and the golden sun-light. Suddenly she dropped Jim's hand, and stooped to pick up something that was shining at her feet; it was a tiny bit of blue and white china, worn smooth at the edges.

"There!" said Hannah, "there, I will give you that. I've got a lovely little pebble that I'm keeping for Mrs. Penwarden, but you shall have this. Perhaps it has come thousands of miles; see how it sparkles!" Jim examined his keepsake with great interest and gravity; it was a disappointment to Hannah when he declared it to be part of a broken

willow-pattern plate, but she was quite satisfied when, after pointing out to her the extreme edge of the island and a bird's wing, he put the treasure into a snug corner of his pocket-book, and said he would take great care of it.

The next morning Jim Penwarden called to say good-bye. "Thank you for coming to see me again," were Hannah's parting words; "and I wish, I do wish, you could take me with you!"

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

"I'VE done it now," said a cheerful voice; "come and tell me how you think it looks—that bit with the daffodils!"

The girl had got a long brush in one hand and a pallet in the other; her head was thrown back in order to see the result of her work; stiff lines of colour along the wainscot, and a little device of flowers on the dark paint of the mantelpiece. "It won't catch the dust like a fringe or a velvet cover."

"I should think not, Miss Hannah; but upon my word, who would have expected to see you turn house-painter?" At the sound of his voice Hannah turned right round to smile and nod at the newcomer.

"I can't shake hands, you see, Dr. Burton. How do you do? I thought you were Jane."

In these six years Hannah had grown into a tall girl, and as nice a one (according to Dr. Burton) as you would wish to meet in a day's march. The

sun fell right on to her, as she stood in the middle of the room; it lighted up her brown stuff dress, and showed the smudges and splashes of paint on her holland apron. Her hair was a shade or so darker; she had more colour; but the grave eyes were unchanged, and it was easy to recognise the Hannah of six years ago; the face was the same with this one exception—the pleading, yearning expression had almost disappeared; the mouth had grown firmer. What had become of the old childish vehemence of character? Dr. Burton, as he watched his little favourite, wondered, and half sighed, as in the turn of her head, in a certain toss of the chin, he recognised a likeness to her dead mother, which had never struck him till lately.

Hannah put down her pallet, and dragged a chair from the corner of the room.

"Do sit down, Dr. Burton, and tell me what's the matter; you don't look quite pleased with me!"

"On the contrary, young lady, I consider that you are looking exceedingly well. House-decorating seems to agree with you."

"Yes, it does; and I like doing it. You see Ada was put out because she couldn't have a mantelpiece with shelves like the one at Ryde, so I said I would try my hand at making the room look pretty. I want to get it done before she comes back."

"Is she still with Mrs. Digby?"

"Yes. I do wish she wouldn't go there so

much!" said Hannah, with a sudden flash of earnestness; "I'm sorry for Mrs. Digby because she is in trouble, and has lost her husband. . . ."

"You are—are you?"

"Yes, I'm sorry; but I think she's the most depressing person I ever had to do with in my life."

"And consequently exercises a bad influence on Mrs. Walter?"

Hannah nodded; the Doctor laughed. "How old are you, Miss Hannah?"

"Eighteen."

"Exactly. Well, I should have given you credit for having more sense than to worry your head about the friendship of two ladies, either of whom is old enough to be your mother; unless, of course, you intend to try and convert them to your views on the subject."

"Dr. Burton!"

"Yes?"

"Now, *do* be nice, and don't tease."

"You see, you don't set me a good example."

"Seriously, don't you think that a woman who has got a devoted husband (for you know she can make Walter do anything she likes) and a nice house like this, and enough to live upon, ought to be very happy?"

"I can't answer that question at all, Miss Hannah. I should have to take into consideration

numerous eccentricities of the fair sex, and life is not long enough."

"Well, *I* think so," resumed Hannah, walking up and down the room, paint-brush in hand; "and I think it was cruel to let Walter go off, as Ada did, and up to the last moment do nothing but grumble about that wretched money affair, that I'm sure must have worried him enough already."

"I am afraid it has, my dear. It was an unlucky affair altogether."

"Yes, I know; but isn't it absurd to make your whole happiness in life depend upon so many thousands of pounds? What *does* it matter if we have got to be a great deal poorer? It is much better to face the thing bravely, at all events."

"You have become quite a philosopher," said the old Doctor; "is that why you took to house-painting?"

"No; I did that, because I promised Walter to make things as nice for Ada as I could. It made me quite angry to hear him talk about her 'losses;' but it's no good; they all go on the same way, and Mrs. Digby is the worst of all."

Dr. Burton shook his head; it was no use trying to damp Hannah's spirits, but it was impossible for him to look upon the loss of Walter Tarne's fortune with such calm indifference. Having heard her out so far, he began better to understand Mrs. Walter's accusations against her young sister-in-law—that she

had no sympathy, and could not be made to care about anything; "utterly incapable of entering into my trouble" had been her complaint, and though Dr. Burton had stood up for Hannah at the time, he now perceived how her view of the case would be likely to annoy a woman of Mrs. Tarne's disposition.

"I am very sorry that you are vexed too," said Hannah; "I have tried to do my best." Here she paused; she was thinking of the day some four years ago, when Walter had told her that he was going to marry Cousin Ada, and what a good thing it would be for her (Hannah) to be nearly related to so excellent and clever a woman. "I have got all sorts of plans in my head; but I mean to be patient, and not trouble you with them just yet."

Dr. Burton stayed another ten minutes, and then took his departure, while Hannah resumed her painting with energy. It was as well that the mantelpiece turned out to be a satisfactory piece of workmanship, for Hannah had got, as she said, all sorts of plans in her head. Her childish ideas on the subject of keeping house for Walter, had naturally faded away, as it first dawned upon her that Cousin Ada was not likely ever to leave Victoria Terrace. For the last few years she had been working so hard at school, that she had ceased to pay much attention to home affairs; but now that school days were over, and Ada had pronounced the judgment that it was quite time for Hannah to

see a little society, to what a state of things did she return! To find Walter distressed, and Ada repining and reproachful; expenses put down in every direction, and the household generally revolutionised in consequence of the unfortunate speculation which had swallowed up the whole of Walter's fortune and the greater part of his wife's. Into this atmosphere of discomfort and discontent came Hannah, with all the strong one-sided views of a schoolgirl, and did her best to persuade her elders, that things would be sure to turn out better than they expected. However, Walter was so taken up with reproaching himself for bringing comparative poverty on his wife that he had no thought for Hannah except as a silly girl, who could not be expected to understand business affairs; and Ada widened the breach by complaining of her as being so unfeeling. "And it will be bad for you too, Hannah," she had said; "for I don't see how we are to afford to entertain, and of course I can't take you to people's houses without returning their civilities. And you seem to have grown out of all your things, and I don't know how they are to be replaced at present, now that we are so straitened in our means.

"Never mind, Ada," Hannah had answered; "I'll do without them, and we will manage to be happy without the parties."

After this, even Jane remarked that Miss

Hannah, as a little child, had been different to other young ladies, and she supposed she always would be.

"I hope Ada won't think this is too heavy," thought Hannah, as she put a dark red line into her decoration; "I think the room will look very nice, if Jane puts up the clean curtains, and we have the carpet put down at once. To-morrow I will arrange the ornaments." With this she brushed her sleeve against a handsome glass épergne (one of Ada's wedding presents); it fell on the floor, and was smashed into a thousand pieces; she was really very unfortunate.

The unlucky destruction of the épergne so annoyed Mrs. Walter on her return home, the following week, that she felt herself quite unequal to admiring Hannah's tasteful handiwork. To tell the truth, she had not arrived in a very amiable frame of mind; the comparison which she had been drawing between Mrs. Digby's circumstances (left the childless widow of a wealthy man) and her own, weighed heavily on her spirits, and caused her to be, if possible, more discontented than ever with her own surroundings. To say that she grumbled, would be to use a mild expression; she fretted, and nursed her vexation, till Hannah sometimes wondered whether it would not be a real trial to her, if she suddenly came into a large fortune, and had to give up her grievance. "Hannah!" said Ada, one morning,

looking up from her letter-writing; "how would you like to go abroad and live? I am inclined to think it would be the best plan to reduce expenses without people talking." Hannah thought it wouldn't matter if people *did* talk, but she was wise enough to know that Ada would not agree with her; so she said, "I should like it immensely; but shouldn't we—wouldn't you have to give up the house, and what would Walter say?"

"I think you may safely allow me to judge of my husband's feelings on such a subject; if I do not do this, I must let part of the house. Mrs. Digby——"

"Ada!" exclaimed Hannah; "pray don't think of having Mrs. Digby here."

"That is just like you, Hannah; you are singularly unable to comprehend what is required of you. I have offered a home to Mrs. Digby, as she wishes to come to London during the season; and you ought to be pleased that I am likely to have so attractive a companion."

"Then what was the use of talking about going abroad?"

"I *must* beg that you will not question me in this manner. You sometimes strangely forget your position in this house. You are entirely dependent upon your brother till you are of age, and you have no right to raise objections to what can only be beneficial to you."

Hannah had grown scarlet; she took up a quill pen that was near her, and began pulling off the feathers, regardless of the appearance of the Turkey carpet. "That is hardly three years," she said at last. "I suppose I can earn my own living in the meantime, and then I need not be a burden to you any longer."

"Can anything be more ungrateful than the style in which you are allowing yourself to address me? —after all the kindness which I have shown you, the devotion, in short, Hannah. I must agree with Mrs. Digby in thinking that it is a great pity that you are so unlike other girls of your age."

Mrs. Tarne took up her pen, and resumed her letter-writing. "One thing more, before we drop the subject—Jane tells me that you expect Mrs. Penwarden to tea this afternoon. I think another time, you might take the trouble to inquire if such an arrangement is convenient to me or not."

"You were out of town when Mrs. Penwarden said that she would come to-day, but I can go back to tea with her instead."

"It does not matter. It is the principle that I object to; you have no right to make arrangements in this manner. Once for all, I will not have the house turned into an hotel. When Mrs. Digby comes, she will be scandalised at such behaviour."

Hannah put down the pen that she had been tearing into shreds, and, without staying to remon-

strate any further as to Mrs. Digby's coming, she left the room. She was accustomed to Ada's reproaches; the accusation that she was so unlike other girls, was one that had been made for years; she had, through long custom, learned to disregard it utterly; but as she went away this afternoon, for the first time it flashed upon her that Ada seriously wished to get rid of her; it had never before been so plainly put before her, that she was dependent and in the way. Often as Hannah had longed for a change, she had never dreamt that she would be allowed to strike out a path for herself; but now Ada had hinted at the necessity for some such step, and if Mrs. Digby came, of course she would be of no more use in the house. There would be perpetual bickerings and fault-findings, from which Hannah had no appeal, for it was vain to write to Walter; it would make him, as she well knew, only more prejudiced against her. Shall I ask Dr. Burton's advice or Mrs. Penwarden's? was her first thought. No; they would be very kind, but strong in Hannah was the desire to make an effort to help herself. After thinking till her head ached, she determined to take matters into her own hands.

Mrs. Tarne was not altogether astonished when, a week later, Hannah brought her a letter on rose-coloured paper, written with a fine steel pen, and signed Rosa Schwarz. "Fräulein Schwarz used to be the German governess at school," explained

Hannah; "now she has gone home and set up a *pension* for herself; you see that she wants an English teacher to help her. I liked Fräulein Schwarz, and I think it will be a good thing for me to go, as she appears to wish it."

"But you are so hasty, Hannah!" complained Ada; "I must think it over. I had intended you to go abroad to finish your education if Walter's affairs had not been so sadly mismanaged; that of course is out of the question. We must answer this letter, and make further inquiries. It will not be necessary to mention the circumstance to any of your friends just at present."

It was evident that the plan had met with Ada's approval. Very soon Mrs. Digby arrived, and proceeded straightway to throw her advice into the same scale. What an excellent thing for a young girl to have such an opportunity! it would improve her German, and enable her to see a glimpse of foreign society. For her part, she considered that Hannah was very fortunate in having a friend like Fräulein Schwarz, willing to take her on reciprocal terms.

Hannah said little; but she wrote her letters, and set to work to collect her books and clothes.

"So you are going back to school again!" said Dr. Burton to Hannah the next time he met her.

"I am going to try and be independent, and see if I can teach my own language."

"Is that it? I heard a different account; but remember, child, whatever happens, write to me if you want help. If you don't like being in Germany, let me know, and I'll come and fetch you back."

He waited for no thanks, but went on swinging his umbrella. "It was an unlucky day when Walter Tarne married that woman," he muttered; "I should like to know what she meant by telling me that she had been obliged to make arrangements for Hannah's going to a German boarding-school, as she couldn't be contented at home. Ugh! I don't believe a word of it. The woman's insincerity is written on her forehead."

The last few weeks flew by quickly. It was a bright summer day when the cab stopped at the door which was to take Hannah down to the docks. Jane only accompanied her, for at the last, having hitherto declared that she should not be happy if she did not know that Hannah had a comfortable berth and agreeable companions on board the steamer, Mrs. Tarne submitted to Mrs. Digby's advice and remained at home. It was a great risk to run, standing about on draughty piers, and one could never know how a slight chill might affect one afterwards.

Hannah was glad. It was hard saying good-bye to the old home and the people she had seen about her since her childhood; but Ada's platitudes were very trying, especially now that she had dropped

her irritable style of speaking, and taken to being plaintive.

"Good-bye, Ada, I will write of course, directly I get to Bernsdorf."

"Good-bye, you are a lucky girl, Hannah. *I* had no such chance when I was your age. You will remember me kindly to Fräulein Schwarz, though I have not the pleasure of her acquaintance. Dear me! What a charming day! I quite envy you your delicious sea voyage, and this lovely breeze! Ah! you young people have the best of it; you have no troubles and no cares. As for me, I am *désillusionnée.* Be careful of your pocket-money. *Au revoir.*"

Hannah kissed Ada and jumped into the cab, followed by Jane, who was wiping away a few tears; Miss Hannah's leaving home was an event that did not meet with her approval at all.

Hannah, with her head out of the cab window, was taking a parting look at the Park; the trees were dusty, and the grass looked scorched; a brightly-painted barge was creeping slowly along the canal; she could hear the men shouting to each other and to the lazy white horse that was pulling from the tow-path. Under the shelter of a tall plane-tree, Hannah could just see the old seat (more rickety than ever) where she had sat as a lonely little girl, and grieved over the hard fate which had sent Cousin Ada to Victoria Terrace;

there, too, Ruth had found her and comforted her. Ah! if Ruth had only lived! Her thoughts flew off to Mrs. Penwarden and the quiet home at Highgate. The kind old lady had shed tears at parting from her darling's little friend (as she still called the tall girl), but Hannah had no tears. No, even now as the cab turned a sharp corner and the Park was left behind, the feeling that was uppermost in her heart was childish delight at going away, and relief that for the present she would not have to spend any more dreary evenings with Ada and Mrs. Digby. Then, too, she was going to do something useful for the first time in her life; to older people it might have seemed a somewhat limited career,—teaching German children in a second-rate German town,—but to Hannah it was the stepping-stone to the construction of a dozen airy castles, which she had built in her busy brain. At any rate,—for she was capable to a certain extent of seeing two sides of a question,—there could be no more reproaches on the score of her dependence for the present; and if her dreams faded into thin air, she could but try something else. Not that she really believed her castles to be insecure; everything was seen through rose-coloured spectacles, and she talked and laughed till even Jane's spirits rose, and she began to think that things might not be so bad as they had appeared.

By the time the luggage was all on board, and the steamer was ready to start, Ada's lovely breeze

was blowing hard, and the few passengers began to talk about a rough sea when they got out of the river. At the last minute Dr. Burton came hurrying down to the docks to wish Hannah good-bye. "Bless you, my dear child," he said; "I don't half like it; if you repent, write and let me know; and, Hannah, you will want to buy some ribbons or frippery,—girls always do; here is a keepsake for you. God bless you!"

The bell rang for strangers to go on shore, and Dr. Burton was bustled away before Hannah had time to thank him. She secured her berth, put on her ulster, and began walking up and down the deck, determined, if possible, to make friends with some one who would answer a few of the questions she was longing to ask. A little lady, wrapped in a voluminous shawl, had seated herself in a comfortable corner; she was knitting busily, but her eyes were not on her work. As Hannah passed for the third time, she nodded and pointed to a seat by her side. "You are English—no?" she asked; giving one look at Hannah from the top of her close-fitting hat to her thick laced boots.

"Yes. How do you know that? I have not spoken a word since we left London, and there is a party of French ladies on board."

"*Ach!*" said the little lady, choosing her words carefully, but speaking clearly with a good accent; "one can see that. *Mein Mann*—he is over there

and speaks to the captain—said you were English at first glance. Do you travel far?"

"To Bernsdorf."

"And we also, that is as far as the Hafen. *Ach*, it is a sad return for us! It is a melancholy day when we arrive!" The little lady dropped her voice, and repeated with a sigh, "*Ach*, a sad return!"

Hannah did not know exactly what to say, but after a moment's hesitation, she sat down by the side of her new acquaintance. "I am so sorry, isn't it a nice place where you are going to?"

"*Ja wohl*, and my birthplace. I have left it only three short months, and my return how melancholy!"

"Have you met with a misfortune?" asked Hannah, beginning to feel much interested.

"*Lieber Himmel!* and what for one!" exclaimed her companion, and then plunged into an animated description, half German, half English, of how she had left home with her husband, who was taking her for a pleasure-trip in his new ship, which was going to Newfoundland—and already, on the Goodwin Sands, in an unlucky squall, the beautiful ship had gone to the bottom of the sea, with her whole cargo!

"How were you saved?" asked Hannah breathlessly.

"An English life-boat took us on land, and the *Mannschaft*, the sailors ——"

"Were they saved too?"

"Yes, not one lost; but the beautiful ship, and my wedding clothes, all gone, and I must now recommence to knit."

"It is a very good thing that no lives were lost."

"*Ja wohl*, one must be thankful, but it is a sad return. Think, Fräulein—one dozen petticoats with beautiful flounces embroidered, and other things to correspond, and the stockings!—fine white knitted stockings all gone!"

"You knit so fast, I have been wondering how you can do it."

At this the little lady cheered up, and said that she was not nearly such a good knitter as her mother; Fräulein should see *her* knit! Then she espied her husband in the distance, and proposed going to ask him to point out to them the objects of interest they would pass, before they got out to sea. Hannah was left alone moralising, and wondering how any one *could* be so childish; and yet she could not help smiling as she thought of the embroidered petticoats,—the little lady was so thoroughly in earnest.

Long before the German captain was weary of holding forth on the subject of the beautiful Thames scenery, it grew dark, and Hannah was obliged to go to the cabin, much against her will. The next day was fine and bright, the captain's wife complimented her on being so excellent a sailor, and regretted that the voyage was such a short one; she

should be sorry to lose the Fräulein's company. Hannah, too, was sorry—the little lady seemed to be the last link with home; every one else was new and strange. She was grateful to the captain for getting her luggage safely through the custom-house, and saying that he would put her under the charge of a friend who was also travelling to Bernsdorf. Once there, she expected Fräulein Schwarz would come and meet her, and she tied the red ribbon round her neck, by which she was to be known, in case the Fräulein should be unable to come to the station herself.

"A happy journey to you!" said the captain's wife. Hannah shook hands affectionately, and thanked her for her kindness. "*Ach!* that is nothing. I grieve to be so mournful a companion, but my return home is sad, very sad. Farewell!" and Hannah left her, still wringing her hands over her lost trousseau.

It was quite dark when the train began to slacken, and the Captain's friend gave Hannah to understand by signs that they had arrived at Bernsdorf; there had been little or no conversation on the journey, as Hannah had already discovered that her school German was almost useless to her; and, worse still, that she could not understand what the people were talking about. However, here she was at Bernsdorf at last: the train stopped at a long crowded platform. Children were screaming, odd-

looking porters with moustaches, were pushing heavily-laden trucks of luggage. It was no use for Hannah to push her way through all these struggling people. So she stood quietly on one side, holding her bag and umbrella in one hand, and her luggage-ticket in the other; for the friendly captain had strongly impressed upon her mind that if she lost *that*, she would not be able to get her boxes at all. It was an exciting scene—such demonstrative greetings, and such tearful leave-takings! Hannah would have been much amused if she had not been very tired, and rather anxious too, as she saw no sign of Fräulein Schwarz or any one whom she might have sent. At last the train went off, and the platform became suddenly empty. A lady and a boy were holding an animated discussion with a military-looking inspector. Hannah summoned all her courage, and determined to venture on a sentence from her school dialogue-book; it was but a simple one.

"*Sind Sie* Fräulein Schwarz?"

"*Nein, mein* Fräulein," answered the lady civilly. Hannah walked on, feeling as if she deserved to be snubbed for having asked so absurd a question; but how is one to be accurate when one does not know the language? It never struck her that probably the lady (like most educated Prussians) spoke English. After a whispered conversation with the inspector, the lady came running after Hannah.

"Can I help you?"

"You are very kind; I expected a friend to meet me, and she is not here. I think I had better have a cab and drive to Augusta Strasse. Is it far, do you know?"

"No, about ten minutes. Shall I tell the man to order you a carriage?"

"Yes, please," said Hannah gratefully. Here the inspector came up and offered to see about her luggage.

"You are not much accustomed to travel—no?" asked the lady.

Hannah explained that she had never been out of England before.

"You are at the Augusta Strasse very soon," said the lady, as a lumbering fly, with two white horses, came rattling up to the station door; she smiled a kind adieu, the boy took off his hat with a flourish, and Hannah set off once more alone on her journey. What a long way it seemed to the Augusta Strasse in that fly, which was large enough to have held a whole school! It did not go very fast over the round pebbles with which the streets were paved, in spite of the two horses and the cracking of the coachman's whip. The streets in the neighbourhood of the station were mostly narrow, and the shops were nearly all closed for the night; but by-and-by they came to a large open space, where there were soldiers, and people stand-

ing about on the door-steps enjoying the summer evening. Then there was a garden planted with shrubs and flowers, and here a band was playing the march from Tannhäuser, and shoals of well-dressed folks were walking up and down, or drinking coffee at little round marble tables. Hannah was very tired now, but she sat bolt-upright on her seat, staring out of the window, and trying to notice everything, in order that, if necessary, she might find her way back to the station, like the children in the fairy tale, who were lost in the wood. Just as she began to think that the man *must* have mistaken the way, he pulled up his horses with a jerk before a two-storeyed house, with a little front garden, and a kind of verandah opening into it.

"Augusta Strasse?" asked Hannah, descending, as the coachman made no attempt to leave his seat.

"*Ja wohl, Fräulein*—Schwarzens;" and he cracked his whip louder than ever.

The upper windows were wide open; Hannah saw two young girls looking at her with curiosity. Then a servant, in a high cap, appeared at the hall-door.

"Fräulein Schwarz?" asked Hannah, beginning to feel how very untidy she must be looking, in her dusty ulster and crumpled neck-tie. The servant nodded, led Hannah across a hall, threw open a door, and ushered her into a room the like of which her English eyes had never beheld before. Yellow-

painted walls, a painted floor without a carpet, tall windows looking out on to a grass-plot, spotlessly-white muslin curtains (that no mortal even attempted to draw), festooned on either side. A round table highly polished, stood in the centre of the room; in front of it was a fur rug with an embroidered border. Above the sofa were two plaster-of-Paris brackets; each supported a pot containing a growing ivy; the branches of the ivy were carefully trained round the frames of several small photographs, and then brought back again in a circle. The servant withdrew, saying something that Hannah did not understand, but she heard her talking in a loud voice to an individual, who was apparently in the garden. There was a shuffling on the mat outside; the door opened slowly, and the familiar form of Fräulein Schwarz appeared on the threshold.

Hannah's spirits rose; she dropped the bag and umbrella, to which she had clung mechanically all this time. "I am so glad to see you," she cried; then as Fräulein Schwarz remained gazing at her, she went on: "don't you know me? Didn't you expect me?"

"*Du lieber Himmel!*" exclaimed the Fräulein, a smile breaking over the pleasant face. "Little Hannah Tarne, and grown! Grown into a tall young lady! But, Hannah, did you not receive my letter? At the last—we have illness in the house—I wrote to put you off."

Hannah felt as if all her hopes were dashed to the ground. "I have had no letter since last week, and I thought you would be sure to expect me. Oh, what *shall* I do?"

"Do not distress yourself, my dear," said kind-hearted Fräulein Schwarz. "It was my fault; I delayed writing until the last moment. And I ought to have known you; you are quite the same little Hannah, but so tall, *ach!* so tall! Two of my pupils are ill upstairs; it is nothing infectious, but I thought to put you off till we were straight again; but now you are here, it is good also!"

Fräulein Schwarz kissed Hannah affectionately on either cheek, and patted her on the shoulder. "I am sorry to think that you should have met no one at the station; and there is no room prepared. But come and let me introduce you to my mother; she does not speak much English, but never mind!"

Through one of the white painted doors, Hannah followed her hostess; here was a much smaller room, great part of which was taken up by a huge white stove, with brass doors that twinkled with brightness; the walls were covered with a dark blue paper dotted with yellow stars; and the furniture, as far as Hannah could see, was, so to speak, bedizened with wool-work. Embroidered cushions on the chairs, crochet antimacassars everywhere; even a picture of the Prince Imperial was framed in a kind of mosaic-work of glass beads. By the window was

a raised platform about four feet wide, and here, seated in a cozy arm-chair, by the side of which was a tiny work-table and a flower-stand, sat Frau Schwarz, busily knitting. She was a small, cheerful-looking old lady, with round eyes like her daughter, round horn spectacles likewise, which she had pushed up above her eyebrows, and a very elaborate cap, fastened under her chin, and trimmed with violet bows.

"Well, *Kind*," she said, "whom have we here?"

Fräulein Schwarz went close up to her, and talked for some minutes so rapidly that Hannah could not make out a word of the conversation; but the old lady appeared to be well pleased, for she came down from her dais, and held out both hands to the new-comer, saying, in a friendly manner, "*Ach!* my dear miss, good-bye, good-bye." This was so evidently meant for "how d' you do," that Hannah refrained from smiling, even when Fräulein Schwarz repeated her apologies for her mother's imperfect English.

"You must try your German," she said; "it will be good practice." And Hannah did try, and quite gained the heart of the friendly old lady by making the effort.

"Most *Engländerinen* are so shy," she observed; "but you have had the advantage of being the pupil of my dear daughter."

This was a good subject of conversation; and when Fräulein Schwarz returned from making

arrangements for the preparation of Hannah's room, Frau Schwarz and the *Engländerin* had learned to understand each other, after a fashion. "You see I have been travelling so long," said Hannah, as she unbuttoned her dusty ulster; "I'm afraid I am very untidy." She smoothed her rumpled hair, and took a peep at herself in a small glass that hung behind the muslin curtain.

Frau Schwarz took hold of Hannah's dress—it was soft dark serge—and felt the texture between her finger and thumb. "Real, real English stuff," she said, in a voice of mingled admiration and respect; "*sehr schön;* Rosa had such an one formerly, also of real English stuff."

"We will take her upstairs now, dear mother," said Rosa, "and to-morrow she must be introduced to the young girls."

Hannah was too tired to make a good supper, much to the distress of Frau Schwarz, who had prepared the meal herself, and brought the tea into the room boiling, on a little brazier, full of red-hot coals.

Upstairs were Hannah's two black boxes, waiting to be unpacked; the keys were in her purse, she had put them there in order to get at them without any trouble. But where was her purse? Not in her dress-pocket, not in her ulster-pocket; she must have dropped it in the train, or at the station! The little purse held all her savings, and the five pounds that Ada had given her for pocket-money. After

much fussing, and running up and down stairs, a key was found which opened one of the boxes, and the servant was sent to the station to make inquiries.

"Dear heart!" exclaimed Frau Schwarz, for the hundredth time; "what a misfortune! We must advertise in the *Morgen Zeitung* the very first thing. *Ach!* what a misfortune." At last Hannah was obliged to comfort her. She was thankful to be able to explain that it was not *all* her money; she had another purse in her travelling bag.

When the excitement had to some extent died away, Hannah said "good-night," and went to her room, with the old lady's kindly *Schlafen Sie wohl* ringing in her ears.

CHAPTER II.

As was to be expected, there was no answer to the advertisement in the *Morgen Zeitung*, and no news of the lost purse at the station, and Hannah, at the expiration of a week, had made up her mind that she must do without it. It was a comfort that she was not likely to incur many expenses as long as she remained at Augusta Strasse. Fräulein Schwarz and her six pupils had the simplest possible notions on the subject of dress and personal expenditure, and Hannah soon found that a mark went twice as far as a shilling at home. The dresses which Ada had denounced as hopelessly shabby, looked quite fresh and stylish in this modest household, and Hannah was clever enough with her fingers in twisting and turning old things till they looked almost like new. She soon made friends with the pupils; they were mostly country girls, who had been sent to town for a year's education, before they returned to their respective homes as grown-up young ladies, ready to begin the course of ball-going that Germans consider so necessary for

their daughters' happiness and future prospects in life. Hannah found that she had a great deal of time on her hands; two or three hours' teaching in the morning, an hour's reading with the elder pupils in the evening, was all that was required of her as English *gouvernante*, though she was expected to encourage the girls to talk English as much as they liked out of school-hours, which, to tell the truth, was very little. The conversation at meals was conducted in English one week and French the next; but it was difficult to induce the pupils to do more than make feeble remarks on the subject of the weather. In the recreation-hours they were different creatures—chatting and laughing with Hannah as if she had been one of themselves, and asking numberless questions about England and English ways.

To Hannah everything was so new and different that she had no time to feel home-sick or unhappy. Frau Schwarz, with whom she soon became a favourite, gave her lessons in German, and rejoiced in having secured so good a listener to her anecdotes about the talents of her departed husband and the virtues of her daughter. One afternoon, some days after Hannah's arrival, they were sitting in the tiny parlour; Fräulein Schwarz was giving a literature lesson upstairs, and in the next room a very little girl (the youngest of the pupils) was practising Czerney's exercises with more vigour than good

taste. The window was wide open, and the sun was shining fiercely on to the garden, with its two round flower-beds and one acacia tree.

"We shall soon be able to sit in the verandah, my dear Miss," said the old lady, "then I shall ask you to be so kind as to water my flowers for me. You like flowers, I know, and these are very old favourites of mine; several of them I have had for years, and tended through the long winter with as much care as if they had been children. And this myrtle (do you see, on the right hand side?) belongs to Rosa; did she tell you about it perhaps?"

"No," said Hannah. She had put down her work in her anxiety to understand all that Frau Schwarz was saying, as sometimes in her excitement she was apt to talk so fast, that poor Hannah could not follow the drift of her remarks.

"Well, my dear child, it was a present five years back, just before Rosa returned to England the last time but one, or perhaps two;—a present from Herr Dr. Brandt. Has Rosa told you perhaps of Herr Dr. Brandt?"

"No, not a word," said Hannah, wondering what was coming next.

"She will some day if all goes well," continued the old lady, nodding her head confidentially; "but I tell you now in secret. She thinks so much of you, the Rosa! And this tree which you now see so strong and tall was quite a little one then, and

Dr. Brandt brought it to Rosa just as she was taking her breakfast, before starting off for the steamer."

"It is very pretty!" said Hannah, as the old lady paused for breath.

"Yes, my dear miss, and think how I have tended it! She would not take it to England; she said it would perish. And the Doctor came here and cried like a child after she had set forth; he is a right brave honest man, the Doctor, and I hope you will——"

A clattering in the street caused Frau Schwarz to stop short in the middle of her story; she looked curiously out of window over the much-admired myrtle. A young Uhlan officer in a gorgeous uniform had pulled up at the garden gate; he appeared to be looking for some one of whom he could make inquiries. After a moment's hesitation, he threw the reins of his horse to the servant, and walked hastily up the path, his spurs clattering and his sword jingling as he went. A loud peal at the bell brought the red-cheeked maid from the kitchen, wiping the soap-suds off her hands with her blue apron.

"Is the lady of the house at home?" inquired the officer in such a clear, ringing voice, that the little girl in the back room left off practising and listened.

Almost immediately Elise brought in a card,

which she handed to her mistress. Frau Schwarz glanced at the card; in large printed letters she read—

OTTO VON FELSENSEE,
Uhlan Regiment, *Lieutenant.*

She had only just time to pull her cap to rights, and to whisper to Hannah, "The gentleman has mistaken the house," before Elise retreated, and the Uhlan stood in the doorway, cap in hand, bowing profoundly. To Hannah's unaccustomed eyes this splendid figure, all glistening with sword and epauletes, looked like an apparition from the Arabian Nights. Herr Lieutenant von Felsensee was, indeed, a splendid specimen of a young Prussian soldier, tall and slight, with a small head and a handsome face, merry blue eyes, and a brilliant smile that showed his well-formed teeth under his fair moustache. He came a few steps nearer to the old lady, bowed again, and said in the same clear voice, just a little softened: "I must apologise for intruding, my gracious Frau, but I come on a matter of business. I seek Frau Hannah Tarne. Have I the honour to address her in this moment?"

Frau Schwarz looked fairly bewildered, but she recovered herself so far as to beg the gentleman to be seated; then she announced that her name was Frau Schwarz. At this piece of information the young officer bowed again; he certainly had the most charming manners, and appeared quite at his ease in the stuffy little parlour, in proportion to

which, he seemed to be several sizes too large. Hannah looked on much amused from her quiet corner, only partly understanding what was going on, and wondering what would happen next.

"You must excuse me if I err again, but I have found a small purse, and the name written inside is distinctly 'Hannah Tarne.' Does no such lady reside here?"

"*Ach, ja!*" exclaimed the old lady, holding up her hands with joy, "this is Fräulein Hannah Tarne, *mein Herr;* she had the misfortune to lose her purse on the very evening of her arrival, just a week ago!"

Herr von Felsensee rose in his stately fashion, and came a step nearer to Hannah. "Will you have the great kindness to present me to the young lady?"

"Herr Lieutenant von Felsensee — Fräulein Hannah Tarne," said Frau Schwarz.

"May I ask you to explain to me, honoured Fräulein," he began, but paused in his sentence, as Hannah coloured scarlet, and looked imploringly towards Frau Schwarz. It was her turn to be embarrassed now; she had caught the word "porte-monnaie" (which she knew meant purse), and had gathered the general meaning of the conversation; but as for being able to speak to this magnificent-looking personage, or to understand his long sentences when addressed to herself, that was quite a different matter. "*Ich, ich verstehe nicht,*" she mur-

mured in a most undignified fashion, and looked (as she felt) thoroughly uncomfortable. Ada had always accused her of being wanting in easy manners and *ton*, and here she was behaving like an absurd school-girl on the first possible opportunity. For a second, the Uhlan looked at her with his quick blue eyes, as if he felt puzzled; then he addressed himself to Frau Schwarz:

"*Das Fräulein* is perhaps rather deaf?"

"No, no, not at all, Herr Lieutenant. She does not understand you; she is an English girl only just arrived in Germany."

"*Ach, so, Engländerin!*" exclaimed the Lieutenant; and his face lit up with a pleasant smile, as he again turned to Hannah, this time speaking in good comprehensible English: "I am sorry to have inconvenienced you; if I had paused to think, I should have seen that you are not one of my country-women."

"Not at all," said Hannah, "it was my fault. I cannot understand much of the conversation at present."

"That will remedy itself with time," said Otto pleasantly; "but I think it must be your purse that I have been carrying about with me for the last week."

"I shall be delighted to see it again; it is a little brown one, and there is a photograph in one of the pockets."

"Of yourself?"

Hannah nodded, and the Lieutenant exclaimed, "Ah! now that you smile I see the resemblance. I must make many apologies for keeping the purse so long, but it was only yesterday that I noticed the advertisement."

All this time Frau Schwarz had been anxiously looking towards the door; she was hoping that Rosa would hear of the visitor's arrival and come to entertain him. She was wondering, too, whether it came within the bounds of etiquette to leave her young charge alone with a strange gentleman, while she went to call her daughter. However, as the young people seemed to be getting on well enough with their English, she thought she might venture on the step; so with a hesitating "Excuse me, *mein Herr*," she trotted to the door, almost before the polite Lieutenant could rise to open it for her. Hannah, quite at her ease now, was of course very glad to have her lost property restored to her, and thanked Herr von Felsensee in her pretty, courteous way; while, on his side, he had a long explanation to make; he had found the purse in a railway carriage in which he travelled to Berlin; it must have been hidden under a mat, and so escaped all previous observation; he had made inquiries at the nearest station with no success, and then he had put an advertisement in a Berlin paper, to which he had received no answer. Only by accident his attention

had been drawn that morning to Hannah's advertisement, and he was pleased to have found the rightful owner. On the arrival of Fräulein Schwarz, Otto repeated the same story, and then after a few more civilities had been passed on either side, he rose to take his leave.

"Is there no one else who has been troubled by my carelessness?" asked Hannah, diffidently; "no one to whom I am also indebted?" She felt she was making quite a pompous speech; she was really anxious to find out if the advertised reward was not owing to some person whom the Lieutenant had not mentioned, but she did not like to inquire.

"I alone am the lucky person who was enabled to do you this small service. Pray, think no more about it."

"Then," said Hannah, with flushed cheeks,—and Fräulein Schwarz thought how charming she looked in her white dress, to which the blue paper made a becoming background,—"I can only thank you again for your kindness, but," as a sudden idea struck her, "perhaps you will accept my photograph; it was taken just before I left London, and my relations thought it good."

"*Du liebe Zeit!*" exclaimed Frau Schwarz, under her breath; but Herr von Felsensee took the photograph with many expressions of gratitude; it was not needed, however, to remind him of the pleasure he had experienced in making the acquaintance of the ladies.

"My name is on the back of it," said Hannah, simply. "Thank you again, and good-bye." She held out her hand; at this Herr von Felsensee looked a little surprised, but he recovered his presence of mind with great rapidity, and took Hannah's hand: "Good-bye," he said; "*meine Damen, ich emphäle mich;*" and his sweeping bow included all three ladies.

They watched him striding down the garden-path; he sprang into his saddle, touched his hat, and trotted down the street.

"Well," said Frau Schwarz with a smile; "he is a charming young man! I am rejoiced that you have got your purse, but, dear miss, the photograph? What made you give your carte-de-visite to an unknown gentleman? And, my dear Hannah, Prussians — officers especially—*never* shake hands with young ladies, unless they are near relations."

"I am *so* sorry," said Hannah; "but I couldn't offer him the reward, could I? and I didn't know what to do. Was it very shocking? I should have given him the photograph if I had been at home."

"Do not distress yourself, my dear," said Fräulein Schwarz; "think how nice it is that you have found your purse; and as for this Herr Lieutenant, you will most likely never see him again; and *he*, he will only think that you are *Engländerin*; that accounts for anything a little remarkable. It has

been quite an adventure; the mother looks flushed and excited!"

"Nevertheless, it seemed probable that, as Bernsdorf was so small a town, with one promenade, and one theatre, that everybody visited, that Hannah and the Uhlan would meet again. It was impossible, indeed, to go for a walk without meeting the same faces daily, and long before the end of the first week, every one in the place had become aware that there was a strange young lady staying at Fräulein Schwarz's. Hannah, who was accustomed to the independence of London, did not fully realise that she was an object of so much interest; it never occurred to her that, in her holland dress and brown straw hat, she should look so very different from the other girls at the Pension, with whom she walked, when Frau Schwarz and her daughter were otherwise occupied. After a little while, she was able to understand what was said to her. The shop people were, one and all, very civil, and it was a proud day when she first undertook to do a commission for Frau Schwarz, and brought home the parcel in triumph. Fräulein Schwarz had great ideas on the subject of a little recreation, both for herself and her pupils; consequently Hannah came in for her share of coffee-parties, excursions, and concerts. It was not at all a dull life that the good people of Bernsdorf led, though the summer (as they said) was not the season. The town itself presented

very few architectural beauties to the visitor, except down by the river, where the bridges and wharves, and high warehouses were very picturesque. Then there was a promenade, tastefully laid out in walks and shrubberies, where the band played, and the fat Bernsdorfian children, attended by loud-voiced *bonnes,* rolled their balls up and down the sandy paths, or fed the ducks to their hearts' content. The streets (in the new part of the town, at least) were broad and cheerful; the houses, most of which were only two stories high, all had gardens, snowy-white curtains, and gleaming brass devices on the doors. As in other parts of Germany, the love of sitting in the open air had led to the erection of numerous summer-houses and verandahs; sometimes an iron cage with a glass roof had been thrown out of the sitting-room. On a fine afternoon you might see many a house-father smoking his pipe, quite unprotected from the public gaze, while his wife chatted and knitted, and his daughter busied herself with the preparation of the coffee.

"Dear Hannah," announced Fräulein Schwarz, one sunshiny evening; "I have a surprise for you." The lessons were over for the day; the pupils were out walking in the country; Hannah was busy writing a German exercise, she was privileged at all times to sit in the little front parlour when she wanted a quiet hour for herself. Fräulein Schwarz had an envelope in her hand: "Look! I have just

received a present of two tickets for the Summer Theatre. Be quick and get ready! You and I will go and enjoy ourselves thoroughly; it is a really pretty piece, and will be a good performance."

"That's delightful!" said Hannah; "but doesn't, Frau Schwarz want to go? Won't it be a waste of the ticket to take me?"

"Not the least bit; my mother does not care for the theatre, and as for the girls, they are going to the concert to-morrow. It is excellent practice for you to hear such a good play—as good as a German lesson. Come, we must be quick. Hast thou not heard, child?"

Hannah needed no further invitation; she put her books together, and ran up stairs, followed by Fräulein Schwarz, who was as much delighted at the prospect of this little outing as one of her pupils would have been.

"Make a pretty toilette," she said; "and put on your English hat."

Rosa Schwarz, without being at all handsome, had such a kind face and fresh complexion that she was always pleasing to look upon; now she wore her best and only black silk dress, with lace collar and cuffs, and appeared to great advantage. She was ready before Hannah, and waiting for her in the front parlour.

"So, so, that is very nice," she said, as Hannah appeared, apologising for being late; she had had

to alter her hat at the last minute. She had put on a pale blue dress of soft clinging stuff, made (English fashion) with a plaited body and very little trimming; round her neck was a gold necklace that Walter had brought from India. The hat, which shaded her forehead and pretty yellow hair, was remarkably becoming.

"It is a magnificent feather," observed Fräulein Schwarz, looking admiringly at the ostrich tip which was curled round the crown of the "English hat;" "we do not have such feathers in Bernsdorf. But you will want something to put over your shoulders. I will lend you Mamma's plaid shawl. See, it is here!"

One glance at Mamma's shawl caused Hannah to wish that she might run and fetch her own jacket; but she did not like to hurt Fräulein's feelings by refusing her kind offer.

"Thank you," she said, "it is so nice and light."

The shawl was black and white check, with a magenta line running through the squares; it had a deep fringe. Hannah doubled it longways, and flung it round her neck with the ends dangling over one shoulder.

"You are a born *artiste*," said Fräulein Schwarz admiringly; "I thought to have sobered down your elegant toilette, and you have only added to the effect!"

"Is it too elegant?" inquired Hannah anxiously.

"*Ach, nein!* I do not mean that, but in spite of Mamma's shawl one may see that you are *Engländerin* at the end of the street."

"Oh," said Hannah laughing, "if that's all, I don't mind."

The Summer Theatre was situated in a garden some little distance from the town, which was a favourite resort of the Bernsdorf aristocracy. Here, on sunny afternoons, you might see happy little groups of people—fathers in curious hats, mothers—who, for the time being, had forgotten their household cares; and pretty red-cheeked girls—all equally bent on enjoying themselves, and equally pleased to meet their neighbours, also in quest of a little innocent amusement. The garden was not large, but it was cleverly laid out, and the walls of the theatre had been decorated with scenes from an impossible Alpine mountain region; but, fortunately, when you got weary of contemplating the imaginary landscape, there was always the beautiful river rushing along the terrace walk, with its ships and boats, and, on the other side, deliciously green meadows, very flat indeed (as was the surrounding country), but very pleasant to behold. Here and there was a peaked cottage roof, crowned with a huge stork's nest; and the stork himself would stand motionless for hours, with his white plumage shining in the sunlight, and the blue sky behind him as a most effective background.

Fräulein Schwarz and Hannah arrived in very good time; the performance had not yet begun, and groups of well-dressed people were still sipping their coffee out of doors.

"I am glad that we are in such excellent time," said Fräulein Schwarz; "shall we walk a little by the river, or would you like to go into the theatre at once?"

"Let us stay out till the last minute, please. Look, there is a lady nodding to you, over there at that marble table!"

As Hannah spoke they passed a party of officers, who were laughing and chatting together; one of them, who seemed to be entertaining his companions, was leaning against a tree, a cigar in his hand. On catching sight of the ladies he flung away his cigar, and, standing bolt upright, saluted them with great courtesy. In less time than it takes to write, all the other young men rose from their seats, with a great jingling of swords, and followed his example. Fräulein Schwarz returned the greeting with the stiff, ungraceful bow which was the custom among the ladies of the higher circles in Bernsdorf. As for Hannah, she walked on, supremely unconscious that these military evolutions concerned her in the remotest degree.

"My dear," whispered Fraulein Schwarz, "why do you not return the salutation? That is Herr

von Felsensee; he remembers us again, you see; the officers have such pleasant manners always."

"I did not know him," explained Hannah; "and why did all the others jump up too?"

"That is the custom, and you know here the gentleman bows before the lady. It would be considered quite indiscreet for the lady to bow first, as you do in England."

"Or to shake hands?" asked Hannah, laughing; "well, I will try and remember some of these things. Dear Fräulein, you must feel as if you were conducting a young savage about."

"*Bitte, bitte!* you are a dear good girl; come and let me introduce you to my friend Frau Doctorin Blumenlaube." Fräulein Schwarz put her hand on her young companion's arm, unable to suppress a feeling of satisfaction (in spite of her little lecture on manners) that Hannah was a general object of admiration.

"And how do you like Bernsdorf, *mein liebes* Fräulein?" inquired Frau Doctorin Blumenlaube, as she made room for Hannah to sit by her side. She was a cheerful-looking little lady, dressed in a dust-coloured costume, extensively trimmed with strips of scarlet plaid silk; she had intelligent brown eyes and a soft gentle voice. "I have not had the pleasure of meeting you before, though I hear much of you through my friend Fräulein Schwarz. Does it please you in our Germany?"

"Very much indeed, thank you, Frau Doctorin. Everything is so new and amusing in Bernsdorf; it is quite like a new world."

"I rejoice to hear it. And you make such progress in our difficult language! I am astounded!"

Hannah blushed, she knew that she had made more than one mistake in her short sentence; however, the little compliment was kindly meant. Frau Blumenlaube continued: "Is this your first visit to the theatre, *liebes* Fräulein?"

"No; Fräulein Schwarz is very good, and has taken me about a great deal. How cool it is by the river!"

"*Ja wohl!* and you must feel it, coming from London. The beautiful fresh air does one so much good!" The Frau Doctorin took a long breath, but it is doubtful whether she inhaled anything beyond the tobacco-smoke from her husband's cigar. "You have much darkness in London—no?"

"We have a great many fogs in the winter, but we don't think much of that, though a thick yellow fog is very disagreeable."

"That I can think; and *yellow* too! and no sun? I should not like to live in a country where one never sees the sun. But you, *liebes* Fräulein, must enjoy plenty of fresh air while you are here, and eat *dicke Milch;* it will agree with you."

Just then a great bell rang; there was a rush towards the theatre; and Hannah was spared the

task of endeavouring to initiate the Frau Doctorin into the mysteries of the English climate.

"We do not sit together," said the little lady, as they walked to the entrance; "but I shall hope to meet again. *Liebe* Rosa, you must bring the Fräulein to visit me; I shall be charmed."

Fräulein Schwarz promised, and Hannah got as far as "*Ich danke Ihnen,*" when she remembered that she had been particularly told that, on the continent, "*ich danke*" meant, "no, thank you;" so she stopped short, and allowed her companion to say all the necessary civilities for her. It was quite clear to Hannah by this time, that she had a great deal to learn still.

It was a grand night at the Summer Theatre, and the house was quite full. First there was an operetta, very nicely put on the stage; and then a long interval, during which the audience walked in the garden, criticised the singers, and exchanged "*Guten Abend*" with their friends. Of course Fräulein Schwarz knew a great many people, and Hannah was much amused watching the enthusiastic manner in which they greeted her, and she did her best to understand their criticisms on the performance. They all had remarkably decided views, and one old gentleman sang a whole passage from the prima donna's principal song in order to explain *where* he considered she had failed in making an effect. Then everybody knew the different mem-

bers of the orchestra, at least by name, if they did not happen to be personally acquainted, so that the remarks were doubly pointed in consequence. "Herr Müller is not playing his best to-night; have you noticed that he came in *just* a little late, when the first violin takes up the melody after the adagio;" or, "The Wilhelm Gutmann is splendid. What a tone the fellow produces from his instrument!"

Long before the discussions were concluded, the bell rang for the second piece. This was a comedy, in which the heroine, an amiable but weak-minded girl, loses the affections of her husband, and is reconciled to him (after innumerable adventures and vicissitudes) at the end of the last act. A star of some magnitude had arrived in Bernsdorf to play the part of the neglected wife, and in her hands the character became one of great interest. Fräulein Schwarz was enraptured; she cried a good deal, and cheered up between the acts to explain the plot to Hannah, and to offer her delicious macaroons out of a mother-of-pearl bonbonière.

"Well, well," said the good lady, as the curtain dropped, and the actress finally retired, laden with wreaths and bouquets, "all things must have an end. It is a magnificent performance, and one to remember. But now, dear child, put on your shawl, or you will get a chill, and come, we will run quickly home. Mamma will wonder that we are so late."

Outside the theatre-door there was some pushing

and bustling; elderly ladies were wrapping up their heads in large woollen comforters; elderly gentlemen were comparing notes as to whether the strange actress was quite, *quite* so good as she had been the last time she came, and whether it was really true that she was engaged to play at Berlin in the following winter.

"Take my arm," said Hannah, who was a good head taller than her companion; "we can easily slip behind that pillar and out of the side door."

"To be sure, so we can. You are so practical!"

As they came out into the beautiful moonlight night, Fräulein Schwarz burst forth again into praises of the excellently-acted play; before Hannah had time to answer there was a quick step on the path, and Otto von Felsensee approached. "*Guten Abend, meine Damen.* I hope you will allow me to have the pleasure of escorting you home."

To Hannah's utter astonishment, Fräulein Schwarz accepted the escort without any hesitation; she did not know that this was strictly in accordance with Bernsdorf etiquette, which allowed a gentleman to see a lady home after sunset, though woe betide him, if he offered to take her for a walk by daylight!

It was indeed a lovely night; part of the way home was by the river-side, the glittering lamps in the busy quarter of the town were reflected in the rushing water, and the moon cast lengthy shadows

of the old bridge and the tall dark warehouses. Fräulein Schwarz and the Lieutenant exchanged a few words on the subject of the enjoyable weather: presently he turned to Hannah.

"*Und Sie, mein geehrtes* Fräulein, how do you like our German performance?"

"I liked it *very* much, especially the play, though, of course there was a great deal of it that I could not make out. And I like your great actress, but don't you think you would rather see her in something that was not, not quite so——" Hannah paused, and hesitated.

"Quite so painful;" suggested Fräulein Schwarz.

"No, I meant quite so unnatural."

"Is it the behaviour of the wife or the husband that strikes you as unnatural?" asked the Lieutenant, who was amused with Hannah's outspoken earnestness.

"I think both characters are unnecessarily exaggerated," said Hannah musingly; "of course the heroine is *very* badly treated all the way through, isn't she?"

"Undoubtedly so; he is quite in the wrong. Are you not of our opinion?" asked Otto, appealing to Fräulein Schwarz.

"I do not imagine that any one could think otherwise; and what a beautiful person she is!"

"Lovely!" said Hannah enthusiastically; "but that is just the worst of it. If she had been a little

less beautiful and a little cleverer, she would have been much more real; but then one feels she would not have a chance in the play. As it is, everything comes right at the end, just because she is pretty; and everybody treats her like a doll or a spoilt baby."

"Surely, you will allow that the first duty of a lady is to look her very best?"

They had reached a narrow part of the path now, and Otto was walking in the road, by the side of Hannah.

"How can you say so?" she asked. "The first duty of a lady is certainly to think of somebody or something besides herself. Appearance is such a *very* secondary consideration."

"English ladies are fortunate in being so certain of their power of fascination, that they look upon things from a wider point of view."

"There, my dear Hannah!" said Fräulein Schwarz; "the Herr Lieutenant has paid a graceful compliment to your countrywomen; you can now admit that good looks are desirable."

"I was not thinking of compliments," said Hannah; "and I never meant to say that it was not a great thing to be pretty, only I do believe that a really beautiful woman does not trouble her head about her looks at all; she takes them as a matter of course."

"My young friend has very decided notions,

Herr Lieutenant," said Fräulein Schwarz, patting Hannah's arm.

"*Gewiss;* I had not thought that so young a lady would have formed such views on the subject. Fräulein Hannah will pardon me if I again express my admiration at the result of an English education."

They were just passing a gas lamp. Hannah had been walking along gravely for the last few minutes; she felt a little uncertain as to whether the Lieutenant was laughing at her or not. With one of her sudden impulses, she looked up in his face and said, "It is very good of you to say such polite things about England and English ladies. I am afraid I have been proving myself to be rather a bad specimen: and, Herr von Felsensee!"

"*Bitte, mein geehrtes Fräulein.*"

"I wanted to tell you that I am very ignorant of German customs. You must excuse me if I make mistakes. Everything here is so strange to me, and when I behave as I should do at home, then *I* appear strange."

"Not at all! Not in the least! I will pay no more compliments, but I assure you the simple truth, that——" He paused, for Hannah was looking at him with her gray eyes wide open, and he could not tell her (as he would have told a dozen other girls of his acquaintance) that if she made any alteration in her manners it could not be for

the better, as she was altogether charming. He began again: "You must not think so badly of us Germans as to suppose that we desire to set ourselves up as a standard of perfection to our neighbours. That would indeed be the true spirit of the Pharisee, and in your case, it would be most unnecessary."

It came as natural to Otto von Felsensee to make civil speeches to a pretty girl as it did to him to breathe, and his ready tact was so great and his manner so courteous that Hannah could not be offended; and as for Rosa Schwarz she was perfectly enchanted with the young officer—he looks *herzensgut*, she thought. There she was right; Otto had a kindly, generous nature; he would not have done a mean action or pushed himself forward at the expense of another for untold gold. His life had been a happy one; he was the idol of his widowed mother, who had given up everything to start him in his career. Here he was, at the age of six-and-twenty, standing high in his regiment, a favourite with all comers, and in a fair way (as Frau von Felsensee sincerely believed and hoped) to making his fortune. In short, it was as good as made, if only—and this was an important point—her son could be induced to share her views on the subject of his marriage. She had selected a bride for him—a young pretty girl, and an heiress. She was hardly out of the schoolroom, it is true; but, nevertheless,

it was the one fault that Frau von Felsensee had to find with Otto, that he had shown no eagerness in claiming the young lady's hand, and in asking the consent of the father, who was already strongly prepossessed in his favour, and likely to approve of the match.

There was no thought in Otto's mind to-night of his lady mother or his bride-elect; he was pleased to be able to show these unprotected ladies the small civility of seeing them safely home. Fräulein Schwarz was evidently a clever woman, who did not consider it necessary to show forth her learning in an inconvenient manner; and as for the Engländerin, she was *allerliebst;* he wished he could have an opportunity of seeing more of her. The mixture of childishness and power of observation that he perceived in her character fascinated him completely. She was altogether different from the ordinary young lady whom he met in the social circles of Bernsdorf; then she was pretty, very pretty when she got excited and looked at him with her beautiful gray eyes.

The way back to Augusta Strasse seemed all too short, and there was no excuse for prolonging the interview. Fräulein Schwarz was profuse in her thanks to the Lieutenant for his kindness; would he be so good as to open the gate? no, she would not trouble him to ring; she had her latch-key; but even that was hardly necessary, as she

could see her mother at the window, who was sitting up for them.

"You are not very late," said Otto. "I hope neither of the ladies will be over-fatigued to-morrow."

Hannah laughed at the very notion; the soft summer air and the bright moonlight made her long to propose another walk into the country, or by the river. She did not feel inclined to go into Frau Schwarz's supper of weak tea and slices of black bread and butter. "I suppose," she said, "that there is some boating here. How I should like to go on the river by moonlight!"

"It is a very pretty idea of yours, Hannah, but I am afraid it would not be safe. Our river has such a rapid current; some day we will go in a steamer—that is pleasant."

"Yes," said Otto; "but one can also take a boat and make a *Wasser-partie*, as Fräulein Hannah says. I went to one this spring, at the invitation of Frau Doctorin Blumenlaube, who invited me in the kindest manner. By-the-by, *geehrtes* Fräulein, I think the Frau Doctorin is a mutual acquaintance; you saw her in the garden to-night?"

"Yes, indeed; she is a most amiable person, as you say." Fräulein Schwarz was feeling for her latch-key, quite unconscious that the Lieutenant had watched the affectionate meeting of the ladies, and had only mentioned the Frau Doctorin's name

in order to bring a topic of common interest into the conversation.

"Good-night, Herr Lieutenant, and many thanks," said Fraulein Schwarz.

"Good-night," repeated Hannah, taking care not to offer her hand this time; "it has been a delightful evening."

"*Gute nacht, meine Damen.*"

Herr Otto von Felsensee bowed profoundly, and set forth into the moonlit street, looking very tall and military.

Frau Schwarz was waiting in the little parlour. "It is good that you come," she cried, jumping up to kiss her daughter and to pat Hannah on the shoulder. "Have you been amused? and who is the gentleman who escorted you home? I would not come out as my cap is somewhat rumpled."

"Your cap looks very nice, as it always does, dear mother; I hope you are not tired. The performance was sublime—*nicht wahr*, Hannah? Not a seat vacant."

"And the gentleman?" inquired Frau Schwarz, who was pouring out the tea.

"Herr von Felsensee; he met us just as we thought to slip out unperceived."

"So, so! I thought I recognised the voice. Has our little English Miss achieved such a conquest? He is a handsome young man—*nicht*, Fräulein Hannah?"

It really was a pleasure to see how Frau Schwarz enjoyed her little joke; it would have been cruel not to have entered into it. Hannah (who was sitting comfortably in a corner of the sofa, making a sandwich of her roll and black bread) put up both hands and exclaimed: "*Wunderhübsch!* and very agreeable too."

Here Fräulein Rosa interrupted and said that it was too bad to tease the dear Hannah, who had behaved so charmingly, and spoken such excellent German that Frau Doctorin Blumenlaube had been astonished and delighted.

"It does not matter," said the old lady; "*wir verstehen uns, nicht wahr?*"

"Of course we do," replied Hannah; "and after all, Frau Schwarz, it is entirely owing to your black-and-white shawl that I have become an object of so much interest. I was obliged to do my best in order to keep up the character. Thank you, very much."

"*Wie, was?*" asked the old lady, as Hannah folded up the shawl and put it back on the sofa; and her daughter translated the little compliment to their mutual gratification.

It appeared that the Frau Doctorin Blumenlaube had really taken a great fancy to Hannah, for she not only asked her to a coffee-party, the week after their meeting in the Summer Theatre, but she begged

that whenever she could be conveniently spared that she would come round and spend the day; the sight of this fresh young maiden, as she said, did her so much good. Fräulein Schwarz was pleased that Hannah should have made such a favourable impression. "It is a good thing for you in many ways," she observed one afternoon; "the Frau Doctorin I have known for many years, she is a richly-gifted, intelligent woman; it is well for you to be in her society; she visits, also, in the first circles of Bernsdorf. I have been wishing to introduce you to her for some weeks; it is well that we met."

"She is exceedingly kind," said Hannah; "and if you are quite sure you don't want me, I should like to go and see her. I will just water the flowers first."

This looking after Frau Schwarz's flower-stand was one of the many little duties that Hannah had volunteered to undertake, thereby immensely gratifying the old lady, who had not originally approved of the introduction of an English girl into her family. She had been brought up to believe that *Engländerinen* were proud and distant, and that when they were not walking over ploughed fields in thick boots, they sat at home by the fireside (in gloves), while the household went to rack and ruin for want of a little supervision. Hannah was therefore an unexpected surprise to her.

"You are an amiable little girl," said Rosa, ignoring the fact that Hannah was half a head

taller than herself; "and you are tending my myrtle with great care—so Mamma says. You do not know how good and true a friend gave me that little tree; some day I will tell you about him, and also of our plans for the future."

"Dear Fräulein," murmured Hannah, not knowing exactly what to say;—it was not the first time that hints had been thrown out concerning the "true friend;"—"I should very much like to hear all about it, if you don't mind telling me."

Rosa pressed her hand. "I feel confident of your ready sympathy; but there is nothing between us—nothing. We are both free; circumstances are against us, money affairs are unfavourable; but we both hope on. And I—I have always the happiness to feel that my mother approves; and so long as the little tree flourishes I shall have the hope that all will end as we wish."

Fräulein Schwarz took out her pocket-handkerchief, brushed away a few specks of dust from the myrtle, and then wiped her eyes.

Hannah kissed her. "I am sure it will. Things always must when people are in earnest; and Frau Schwarz has told me something about Dr. Brandt, she believes in him too."

"*Gewiss, ja,*" said Fräulein Schwarz, smiling through her tears. "And who knows? The scales may turn in our favour any day! Now I will detain you no longer. *Adieu, liebe* Hannah, *adieu.*"

As Hannah shut the garden-gate, she caught sight of Frau Schwarz at the bedroom window, waving her hand: "*Amusiren Sie sich gut!*

"*Vielen Dank,*" answered Hannah, nodding, and waving *her* hand. She went her way, crossing over the road to walk on the shady side of the street, her head quite full of the little scene in which she had just been taking part. "I suppose Fräulein Schwarz *is* engaged to this Dr. Brandt, and it must have been going on for years; we never knew anything about it at school. She is a good little woman; but, dear me, what constancy! and how fond they are of a little love-making! Perhaps if I had been a German girl I should have believed Frau Schwarz's nonsense about Herr von Felsensee. He certainly is the handsomest man I ever saw in my life; but then Ada says I am not attractive,—and the *idea* of falling in love at first sight like the heroine of a novel!" Hannah smiled to herself at the notion. An old gentleman who was coming along, stepped into the road to make room for her to pass, and took his hat off with a flourish: "*Guten Tag, mein Fräulein.*"

Hannah bowed, and returned his *guten Tag;* she recognised him as the critical friend who had sung to her at the Summer Theatre.

"He will think I am as wild as the rest of my countrywomen, if I walk along laughing to myself," thought Hannah. "I really must behave in a more

stately manner; it's no good worrying about other people's notions of love-making. It's quite clear that I haven't got a heart at all!"

The old gentleman turned round after a little bit, just in time to see Hannah fly up the steps of Dr. Blumenlaube's house; "*Eine feine kleine Dame,*" he said, pulling out a huge cigar; "*eine charmante kleine Engländerin!*"

CHAPTER III.

DR. BURTON was coming away from Mrs. Walter Tarne's not in the best of humours. It was a drizzling, gray kind of day; the wind moaned, and the Park looked miserable and gloomy, as it is apt to do on a damp afternoon at that time of year. Most of the houses in the terrace were shut up and deserted, and everything bore the melancholy aspect of London in August, that occasionally strikes a chill to the heart of a thorough old cockney like Dr. Burton. As he turned the corner, he pushed against a young man coming in the opposite direction.

"I beg your pardon!" exclaimed the young man.

"Granted, sir, granted. Why, bless my soul! Penwarden! How do you do? I had the pleasure of meeting you at our friend's, Walter Tarne's, some years ago. You were returning to Cape Town I think? Fine climate, from all accounts."

"It is indeed," said Jim, shaking hands warmly; "it's quite a change to come back to all this mist and darkness; but it's home after all. You have

a good memory, Dr. Burton, I am ashamed to say that I don't think I should have recognised you, if you had not stopped me."

"If I had not knocked you off the curbstone, I suppose you mean. I never forget a face, Mr. Penwarden; I can't always remember the name, but the face sticks by me."

"You would find that a useful gift in the Colony, where we see so many new people. I was going to call on the Tarnes; are they in town, do you know?"

"You will find Mrs. Tarne there. Miss Hannah has gone abroad;—very great changes since you were here last."

"Yes, I heard that I shouldn't see my little friend Hannah, Miss Tarne, I mean. It is a great disappointment, but perhaps we shall meet abroad; I have business in Hamburg next month."

"Let me know when you start; I shall ask you to be so good as to take a message to Hannah for me. Let me see,—come and dine with me. Are you staying in town?"

"Yes, for the present; I shall be very pleased to dine with you any day this week; next week I may be off again."

"What birds of passage you young people are, to be sure! Now, I hate travelling, and always did. Will Friday suit you?"

Jim Penwarden said that it would suit him very well.

"Seven o'clock. Don't forget," grumbled Dr. Burton. "Here, I'll give you a card, or you will be forgetting my address. I will write on it, seven o'clock punctually. Now, good-bye to you; don't forget."

Jim promised, and went on to pay his call. The visit was not a satisfactory one, he had never been a favourite with Mrs. Walter, and to-day she had been put out by that provoking old man, Dr. Burton, and was not in a gracious mood by any means; however, she inquired civilly after Mrs. Penwarden, and asked Jim how long he intended to stay in England.

James Penwarden, being a simple-minded man, who did not understand the quips and cranks of fine ladies, thought that she really wished to know something about his plans, and entered into an account of how he should probably settle in Europe (being now a partner in the firm), as it was proposed to open another house of business. Of course, he must return once more to the Colony, and wind up affairs.

"Indeed!" observed Mrs. Walter, assuming her most preoccupied expression of countenance; "how very interesting that will be. I must congratulate you, Mr. Penwarden."

She had paid no attention to what he had been saying, and was impatiently wondering how much longer he intended to stay.

"Thank you," said Jim, supposing that his hostess referred to his being made a partner, and settling in Europe; "I shall be sorry for some reasons, though, to leave the Colony."

Mrs. Tarne said nothing.

"Have you heard lately from Miss Tarne? Is she quite well?"

"Exceedingly well, I thank you, and enjoying herself amazingly, as young people do. She is not a good correspondent, but I did not imagine that she would be. It is what one must expect; girls will be thoughtless and inconsiderate. It is only what one anticipates, and Hannah was always somewhat *entêtée*. She was wild to go abroad; I could not prevent it. My influence is but small. 'Women must weep,' you know, Mr. Penwarden; and I am not repining."

Jim failed to see the force of the quotation, but he contented himself with saying that Miss Tarne was a great favourite with his old aunt, and that he had lively recollections of her as a charming little girl.

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Walter. "Yes, Hannah has always been popular with those who stand outside the family. Next month, did you say, Mr. Penwarden, that you were leaving us for the Cape? What a short visit!"

"I am leaving for Germany, almost immediately, Mrs. Tarne," replied Jim, rising to take his leave; "have you any commands for me?"

"Not any, I thank you. Remember me kindly to all at home. Good afternoon."

Punctually as the clock struck seven James Penwarden appeared at Dr. Burton's door, feeling (it must be said) a little curious as to what kind of reception he should meet with. Dr. Burton belonged to that class of mankind that shows to its best advantage at home; he received his guest kindly, nay affectionately, in the snuggest of snug libraries, with a bow-window looking into the Park.

"I am delighted to see that you know the charm of punctuality. It is a virtue not much practised in the present day; however, between ourselves, I have educated my cook to such a high appreciation of it, that I am rather afraid of her myself, and tremble in my shoes if I come in a few minutes late. Thus you perceive, the excess of a virtue may become an evil."

When dinner was over (it did great credit to the talents of the highly-educated cook) Dr. Burton proposed that they should return to the library, where, as he said, he always felt more at home than in any other room in the house.

"The fact is, Mr. Penwarden," began Dr. Burton, "I am anxious about the welfare of my young friend Hannah Tarne. I knew her mother when she was a girl, and the child's happiness is a matter of great importance to me. Now don't interrupt" (Jim had not so far spoken a word); "you will ask me next

what business it is of mine; well, perhaps you are right, and I am an old fool for my pains, but at the same time it *is* a matter of importance to me. As for Walter Tarne, he is no use at all in the matter, being a one-sided, prejudiced man, who sees everything through his wife's eyes. Some of us think that he does not obtain a clear view of life by doing so, but he pleases himself. There are also little family difficulties and misunderstandings which help to prejudice him against his sister; he didn't like his father's second marriage (that's not to be wondered at, of course), though the late Mrs. Tarne was a highly-cultivated, delightful woman." Here Dr. Burton paused and pushed a box of special cigars towards his guest. "A delightful woman," he continued, "and good; but Walter didn't like her. We can't account for tastes, and he *does* like his wife, the present Mrs. Walter."

"Perhaps that is as well," suggested Jim.

"Perhaps it is, sir, but in my poor opinion she is a selfish, empty-headed person. Now we come to the young lady herself. The highest compliment I can pay her is to say that she reminds me of her mother. Mrs. Walter Tarne, with her airs and graces (she is thoroughly insincere) has, so to speak, got rid of her. Hannah, who has plenty of character, thinks that she ought not to be in the way, and off she flies to Germany at a moment's notice. She writes to me now and then, and says she likes it,

but I am still anxious. I want you, Penwarden, to ask her from me whether she has changed her mind, and would like to come home. You are an old friend, and she would tell you fast enough if she's miserable among these foreigners, though she is much too proud to write and say so. I am a tolerably good judge of character" (Jim said that he didn't doubt it for a moment); "it sounds like an exaggeration, but it is a fact; as a man comes in at my door I can tell you what he's worth—can tell you whether he's to be trusted or not. It is not necessary for any one who comes to me to bring a letter of introduction. Without prejudice, I may say that I know the person I can trust at first sight—man or woman; it is impossible to deceive me; and I take you to be one of the right sort."

Jim Penwarden attempted to acknowledge the compliment, but Dr. Burton was fairly started now on his favourite hobby; it was not easy to stop him, so Jim, being a man of few words, listened patiently to the very end of the harangue, thereby winning the fiery little doctor's liking and esteem. But Dr. Burton could talk on other subjects too, and by and by Jim found that he was being led into giving a pretty accurate account of life in the Colony, and, indeed, confiding in his host to a greater extent than he would have thought possible a few hours ago.

On his solitary walk home Jim meditated on the different reports that had been given him of his

little friend, for somehow it was always as the little girl, with sad eyes and a knack of saying out-of-the-way things, that he remembered her. To tell the truth, he had long since made up his mind that Bernsdorf would be a convenient place to stay at, on his way to Berlin. What was the real Hannah like? "A sweet, lovable girl," Aunt Rachel had called her; "clever," Dr. Burton had said, and "proud;" while Mrs. Tarne had insinuated that she was "thoughtless and ungrateful"! So many sides to her character! Was this the result of neglect and a boarding-school education, to convert the simple child into an insincere woman? Jim could not believe it. The memory of Ruth's little friend would always be dear to him, if for that reason only, that Ruth had loved her; he was not apt to make new friends in a hurry, or to forget the old ones. "Oh! I wish you would take me with you!"—these had been her last words when he bade her good-bye at Yarmouth; he had thought her charming then, and it was with a feeling akin to disappointment that he tried to prepare his mind for an interview with a strange young lady, who would perhaps regard his calling upon her in the light of a liberty. He might find it difficult, nay impossible, to deliver Dr. Burton's message at all. Why had he consented to put himself in such an unpleasant position?

By the time he got home to the quiet street at Highgate, Jim had almost persuaded himself that he

would be unable to spare time to visit his friends at Bernsdorf.

"I have had a letter from Hannah," observed Aunt Rachel, the next morning at breakfast; "and here is a message for you, my dear Jim:—'Please tell Mr. Penwarden, with my love, how sorry I am to miss seeing him. I hope there will be a chance of our meeting some time or other if he really means to stay in Europe.'"

That afternoon Jim Penwarden made the final arrangements for his continental tour. On the whole, he had come to the conclusion that Bernsdorf was *not* out of his way.

In the meantime events moved on pleasantly and quietly for Hannah. It was now late in August; and as the pupils were home for the holidays, she had a great deal of time to herself. One morning Fräulein Schwarz received a letter which caused much excitement in the little household. Could dear Rosa spare Fräulein Hannah for a fortnight (wrote Frau Doctorin Blumenlaube) to accompany her to the seaside? The Doctor was too busy to make one of the party, but he would join them later on and bring them home again. Then came an affectionate message to Hannah, and an intimation that she should, of course, be treated as a dear guest, and that all expense for travelling and lodging would be taken off her hands. If ever there breathed a

kind-hearted little woman, it was Rosa Schwarz. Of course Hannah must go! It was a delightful idea, —so friendly of Clara Blumenlaube,—and Hannah would enjoy herself amazingly; it would do her so much good. She was beginning to look pale from the heat; she was not accustomed to a German sun.

"We will go at once and accept the invitation —*nicht?*"

However, Hannah had scruples. She had come to Bernsdorf with great ideas on the subject of being useful and working hard. It was surely inconsistent with these resolutions to give her mind to so much pleasuring; and the pupils would be back in a week's time, and then Fräulein Schwarz would be left without any help.

"Do not think of it, my dear Hannah; as for the pupils, they will not return for two weeks. I will tell you that I have put them off. The fact is, *liebe* Hannah——" she stopped, and turned over the leaves of a book, "that I expect a visitor in three days, one whom I hope to introduce to you. I have told him of you often."

"Not Dr. Brandt?"

Fräulein Schwarz nodded.

"I *am* glad!" exclaimed Hannah, at which Fräulein Schwarz kissed her on both cheeks, and said that she had been a true prophet, for now there was a chance that all might indeed go well. After this, Hannah raised no further objections to the Frau

Doctorin's scheme; now that she was sure her presence was not needed at Augusta Strasse, she had time to think what a delightful one it was.

"You will come to me a day or so before we start," said Frau Doctorin Blumenlaube, when they were talking it over together; "I have arranged to take you and some other young friends to Friedrichs Wald; it is unfortunately the day before our departure, but I daresay a little dancing will not overtire you for the journey—*nein?*"

Hannah was quite sure it would not; and the Frau Doctorin went on, delighted, "I have secured one gentleman certainly, and a firstrate dancer, the Lieutenant Otto von Felsensee."

"Herr von Felsensee brought back my purse; besides I have often met him with Fräulein Schwarz, and I like him."

"*So, so!*" laughed the Frau Doctorin; "an old acquaintance and you like him! The liking is mutual, then, I can assure you; the Herr Lieutenant did not enter into particulars, but I understood that he was interested in my Engländerin. *Es thut nichts;* you need not blush; he is an excellent young man, whom I have known for months."

Friedrichs Wald was the name of a village about six miles from Bernsdorf, where, on the strength of a small wood, and a little inundation of the otherwise flat country, an enterprising peasant had organised a fortnightly *réunion.* The pleasure-loving Berns-

dorfians who attended these social gatherings, drank their coffee under the shade of an oak, and then walked about the twisty paths of the little wood in truly rural fashion. The crowning point of the entertainment, however, was the dance, which was held in a barn belonging to the farm-buildings. The *réunion* was patronised by the officers; the band was military. Mothers of families brought their daughters; fathers came to meet their friends;—in fact, the aristocracy of Bernsdorf (on a fine afternoon) might be seen disporting itself at Friedrichs Wald, walking its shoes damp in the sloughs of the wood, and dancing them dry again on the rough barn floor.

The day came, bright and hot. Long before the carriage was announced or the Frau Doctorin had finished arranging her summer paletôt, Hannah was ready and waiting. In spite of her white dress and pretty hat, she did not appear to be in a holiday-making mood. In her hand was a letter on pale straw-coloured paper, crossed and re-crossed, and as she turned over the pages the expression of her face grew sad and distressed. The letter was from Ada —pages of discontented complaints and reproaches. On one side she bemoaned herself anew over her loss of fortune, on the other she complained that Hannah had gone away and left her to bear the brunt of home trials alone. "But you were always the same, bent upon having your own way at the expense of others. I have received a letter from

Walter, and he agrees with me in thinking that your place should have been at home; but I do not repine."

"At home!" thought Hannah, as she stared out of window at the row of flower-pots that kind Frau Doctorin had arranged with her own hands; "nobody can know better than Ada that I have no real home; it's all a sham, it's cruel!" She took up the letter again and read another sentence. "Your friend Mr. Penwarden has just called; his manner is but little altered—not at all improved; but I daresay you have heard of his arrival already. He contemplates returning immediately to the Cape, so I understood. I told him how much you were enjoying your foreign trip. Mrs. Digby will be glad if you can send her another crochet pattern; the Germans are such firstrate needlewomen. That reminds me that I am now entirely thrown on my own resources; Jane has been so disrespectful and neglectful that I have been advised to dismiss her. She leaves to-morrow. I really do not know how I shall be able to manage without the assistance to which I have always been accustomed. Things are indeed changed!"

When the Frau Doctorin came to fetch Hannah, she found her standing in the middle of the room, with the letter still in her hand.

"My nieces are both arrived, and the Herr Lieutenant will meet us at Friedrichs Wald. But what is it? Have you bad news from England? Tell me, Hannah, are you unhappy?"

"No," said Hannah, making a violent effort to appear cheerful; "only my letter has put me out rather. Never mind, dear Frau Doctorin; I'm quite well."

"But you are not!" cried the excitable little lady; "let me bring you some eau de Cologne, or my fan."

She was so distressed that it was impossible to dismiss the subject altogether, as Hannah would have wished.

"My dear child," began the Frau Doctorin again; "do not trouble to explain that you have not too comfortable family circumstances. I know already from the Rosa; and you so young! Just hold this vinaigrette to your nose; you look faint."

"I am sorry to have missed seeing an old friend," said Hannah, taking her kind hostess's hand; "there is no bad news."

"*Gewiss?*"

"*Ganz gewiss,*" answered Hannah cheerfully; "let us go down at once."

Frau Doctorin Blumenlaube's nieces had already taken their places in the lumbering fly, which was to convey the party to Friedrichs Wald. The coachman, in a shabby coat and preternaturally shining hat, was busy cracking his whip, and exchanging greetings with another of his craft, who was waiting at a door opposite. The white horses stood sleepily in the loosest of traces, with their

heads quite close together, till the final summons to depart was given, for long experience had taught them to pay no attention to the cracking of the whip, which indeed was simply intended as a hint to the inmates of the house that everything was ready.

Hannah and the two nieces had often met before; they were two lively talkative girls, wild with delight at the prospect of a few hours' dancing, this being one of the rare opportunities likely to be offered them, for indulging in their favourite pastime, while the warm weather lasted. And it *was* hot; the sun shone red and fierce from a cloudless sky on the dusty road. The whole country seemed to be asleep and gasping; miles and miles of swampy ground (from which the peat was cut in long strips, and carted away to distant parts) looked red and scorched; the people working in the fields had covered their heads with handkerchiefs, and in most cases were walking barefoot. The Chaussée itself was thoroughly awake, in spite of the dust and the heat; here, the Blumenlaube party encountered carriage after carriage, laden with elegantly dressed ladies, all evidently going in the same direction. The coachmen nodded to each other; the dust rose higher and higher; hats flew off; and Frau Doctorin and her nieces exchanged salutations with their friends, till Hannah began to think that the whole of Bernsdorf must be on the way to Friedrichs Wald. She was much amused

with the whole scene, and quite sorry when the carriage turned off from the Chaussée, into a narrow and still dustier road, at the end of which was a dark line of trees, and a tall pole with a flag flying.

"*Miene lieben Kinder!*" exclaimed the Frau Doctorin; "I hope that your dresses are not much soiled. We should have done better to bring more dust cloaks, or really, I think an umbrella would be some protection. *Ich bitte Euch!* Here comes another carriage!"

She hastily put up an umbrella, to shelter herself and Hannah from the cloud of fine sand, that came rolling after them. "*Schmidt's?*" roared the approaching fly man, who had mistaken his road; "is it to the right or to the left?"

"Back to the Chaussée, and the first house on the right. *Guten Tag!*" was the answer.

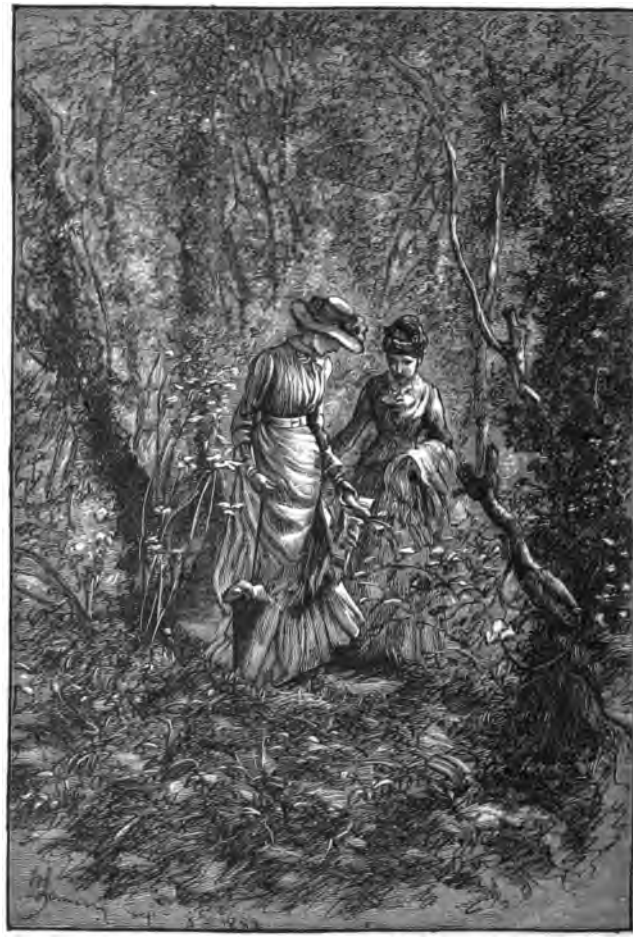
"What an unfortunate spot to choose to turn his horses in!" observed the Frau Doctorin; "I wonder that the man does not know his way; he has a stranger in the carriage, I suppose. The Advocat Schmidt receives much company."

"The portmanteau looks foreign;" said one of the nieces; "is it American or English, Fräulein Hannah?"

Hannah peeped out from under the shelter of the friendly umbrella. The leather portmanteau looked decidedly English; as for the stranger him-

self, she only caught a glimpse of a red beard and a dusty coat.

The first impression made by the inn at Friedrichs Wald was not a very imposing one. A high-roofed, picturesque farmhouse, pretty enough, with its brown walls and red tiles, had not the owner, in an unfortunate moment, added a stucco front (solely out of consideration to the feelings of his aristocratic customers), which was hideously out of keeping with its surroundings. The doorway was ornamented with a lattice-work porch, much out of repair; there were three little square windows to the right of it, and three little square windows to the left. The carriage-drive that led up to the house was several inches deep in fine sand, suggesting the thought that, though it was bad enough in August, the approach might become impassable after the winter had set in. Not that it mattered, as no carriage ever did approach except in the season; the landlord thoroughly understood how to make hay while the sun shone; he supplied his customers with excellent refreshments, and the best band that was to be had in Bernsdorf; but he refrained from spending more than was actually necessary on repairs. The garden, therefore, with the exception of a flower-bed or two, was neglected; the stucco front of the house was streaked and stained; the gate almost off its hinges; and the only thing that looked clean and new was the tall



"Look, how I have torn my dress!"—P. 161.

pole surmounted by the black and white Prussian flag.

Several young men, who were standing about, came up to the Frau Doctorin's carriage, and assisted the ladies to alight. The nieces soon found a host of people they knew, and each new comer, in turn, was introduced to Hannah, according to the kindly German fashion, that tries to make everything pleasant for a foreigner. By and by it was proposed that the girls should take and walk in the "Wald;" Hannah must see those beauties of scenery that she had so often heard praised.

The wood opened on to the garden; trim little paths ran in all sorts of directions, curling round under the trees, and every now and then terminating in a pavilion or a bench, where the wanderer, fatigued with loitering in this square mile of forest, might rest and refresh his eyes with a view of the distant country, for which laudable purpose the lower branches of the nearest trees had been clipped away. The evenings had grown perceptibly shorter the last few weeks, and Hannah and the youngest niece, who had strolled away from the rest of the party, found themselves at the extreme end of the wood just as the sky began to glow with the approaching sunset.

"Adèle!" exclaimed Hannah, disentangling her dress from the clutches of an unlucky bramble; "look, how I have torn my dress! What shall I do?"

"What a pity! this beautiful trimming, that I

have admired all the afternoon! And I think I hear the band already. Yes! and the dance will commence immediately. Never mind; I will run back and ask for a needle and thread; then we can sew up the rent, and no one needs to know at all."

"I am giving you so much trouble," said Hannah apologetically; "how careless I am!"

"*Bitte, bitte!* you remain here, and I will return in five minutes." Left to her own devices, Hannah looked round. Just in front of her was a clear space, separated from the path by some wooden bars. "I can easily push them aside," thought Hannah; "and I shall get such a capital view of the sunset." The bars dropped at one end of the post, as she put her hand on them; she had not reached the opening when she paused, perfectly dazzled with the loveliness of the scene. The wood ceased suddenly at this point, and she got a view of the flat quiet country, with its green fields and dotted villages. Much nearer than Hannah had imagined ran the silver line of the river; a steamer laden with excursionists was returning to the town, and she could see the puffs of white smoke rising into the sky. And what a sky! The sun was setting fast behind a bank of angry clouds; above and below the clouds were streaks of colour—crimson, yellow, blue, violet, green; all changing as the rays of golden light flashed and quivered. There was no sound except that saddest of all sad sounds, the

croaking of innumerable frogs. To Hannah it seemed very lonely and dreary; she pressed forward to get another and a better view of the sunset; it was less dismal out there than in the dark wood. As she moved, she heard a rustling in the shrubs at her side.

"Go back!" cried a voice.

"It can't be for me," said Hannah to herself; and turned again to the glowing sky.

"*Zurück!*" cried the voice again, this time quite close to her; "go back, Fräulein Hannah!"

In her amazement and uncertainty, Hannah went on another step—only one, and the ground seemed to fall away from under her feet. Her arm was seized, and she was dragged back from (what she now saw to be) a yawning hole in the very middle of the path.

"Heaven be praised! I thought I was too late."

Hannah turned. The speaker was Otto von Felsensee.

"What has happened?" she gasped; "I did not know that you were calling me."

"It is all safely over now, *geehrtes Fräulein.* I hope I have not startled you very much."

"No, but tell me; oughtn't I to have come here?"

"It is no fault of yours. It is shameful to leave the place in this unprotected state. How were you to know that the old well is there?—only a few feet from the public path."

"I pushed the railings aside."

"*So!* But the well should be properly boarded up, not left so that a lady knocks away the cover with her foot. I will speak to the landlord. And now I have frightened you very much, and Frau Doctorin will scold me; but I was obliged to take hold of you so roughly."

"Herr von Felsensee," said Hannah, looking up, "if you had not come just at that minute, I should have fallen into that horrible hole."

"I think not, *mein Fräulein*, but you would have hurt your foot, or alarmed yourself still more. Do not let us think of it."

"But I *must* think of it; how can I help it?"

This time Otto did not exhibit the slightest sign of disapproval or surprise, even when Hannah held out both her hands and put them into his. "Don't say anything about my clumsiness to Adèle; here she comes to look for me."

The Lieutenant bowed, saying that he had been commissioned by the Frau Doctorin to inform the young ladies that it was time to return.

"I would not miss one dance for the whole world," exclaimed Adèle, who was so out of breath with running that she did not notice Hannah's disturbed looks; "I am engaged up to the twelfth waltz."

"You have left one for me, I trust, *gnädiges Fräulein?*"

"You come too late, Herr Lieutenant; an extra tour is all I can promise."

"I am, indeed, unfortunate," said Otto; "I hope that you, Fräulein Hannah, will be more gracious?"

Hannah, who had no ideas on the subject of reserving special dances for favoured partners, and had never even heard of an "extra tour" in her life, said "Yes" at once—she should be very glad to dance with the Lieutenant.

The garden presented a very animated appearance; a great many people had arrived since the afternoon; officers who had been detained, and young men who could only get away from town at the last moment. The band, having played one waltz out of doors to collect the scattered company, had already gone into the house, but groups of eager dancers were comparing notes as to their engagements for the evening. There were no programmes at the Friedrichs Wald *réunions*. This arrangement naturally led to occasional misunderstandings, especially as the memories of the young ladies were of that convenient and elastic order that they could upon occasion, ignore a promise to one unlucky man, in order to substitute a more favoured partner. Any way, it was a matter of grave importance this dancing, and must be gone through with to the very end.

Frau Doctorin Blumenlaube was overjoyed to greet her dear girls again; she praised the Lieutenant

for bringing them back so speedily. "And your dress, *liebe* Hannah? is it all in order again?" she whispered; "Adèle told me of the catastrophe."

By this time the assembled company was flocking towards the porch, down a broad passage lighted by one dim lamp, into the ball-room. And what a remarkable ball-room! Truly, the proprietor of Friedrichs Wald Inn must have been a man of enterprising spirit (though you would not have thought so to look at him) to have conceived the idea of converting his humble premises into a rendezvous for the great people of Bernsdorf. The ball-room was simply a barn, so constructed that you could see the rough beams that formed the high pitched roof; at one end, where the band sat, was an attempt at decoration, consisting of coloured glazed calico and boughs of evergreen. In the four corners were frames of wood, to each of which a dozen tallow candles had been wired after the fashion of a Christmas-tree. Above the band was a loft, piled with huge bundles of hay, and every now and then a stray hen, disturbed by the unusual noise, strained her neck over the rafters, and surveyed the company with dissatisfied eyes. Along each side of the barn ran a wooden partition with bars, and here were the cows snugly shut in for the night. They were mostly too indifferent to trouble themselves about the vagaries of restless human beings, but occasionally a soft nose was pushed

through the chinks of the doorway, or a gentle lowing reminded the dancers of their existence.

"Is *this* where we are going to dance?" asked Hannah amazed.

"Yes! Is it not primitive? I always say that the young people amuse themselves better at Friedrichs Wald than in the most elegant *salon.* It is so simple and independent!"

At this moment a steward appeared, and asked if he might have the pleasure of introducing a partner to the Fräulein, whom the Frau Doctorin was escorting. Hannah being quite willing, was soon engaged in pioneering her way through a most elaborate and bewildering form of "quadrille" with a very young man in shining boots, who first inquired how long she had been in Bernsdorf, and then observed that he had had the pleasure of seeing her (as a rule) twice a day for the last three months. After the quadrille was over, the band struck up a waltz of Strauss, and a dozen couples danced quietly round the long barn and back again to their places, to be succeeded by another relay of eager waltzers. There was a great deal of talking and laughing, and some stamping on the uneven floor, but no pushing or crowding, as each "Tänzer" kept himself and his partner warily out of the way of the other couples.

It was a pretty scene—the gloomy old barn dimly lighted up; the gay dresses of the girls, the uniforms of the officers, and the happy faces of

admiring chaperons. Hannah was so deeply interested in the sight that she did not at first see Otto von Felsensee standing by her side, with a lady on his arm.

"Are you not engaged for this waltz, *geehrtes Fräulein?* May I have the pleasure of an extra tour?"

"Yes, I shall be very happy," began Hannah, wondering what was to become of his partner. However that difficulty was soon solved, for a very gorgeous officer approached; he bowed to Otto, bowed to the lady, murmured, "Our extra tour, I think, *mein gnädiges Fräulein;*" and carried her off in triumph.

"You must not expect me to dance like that," said Hannah, as she watched the whirling couple with admiration.

"I have no doubt but that I can accommodate my step to yours, *geehrtes Fräulein.* There will be no difficulty; you dance the valse à trois?"

Hannah nodded assent. "You will leave your shawl with the Frau Doctorin," suggested Otto; "it will inconvenience you."

"Yes, yes. Give it to me," said the Frau Doctorin; "now go, Hannah. What music, splendid!" She beat the time with her foot, and watched the movements of her protegée, anxious that she should appear to advantage amongst the other girls. There was not the slightest need for anxiety; Hannah

loved dancing, and though she did not know it, had got the best partner in the room, and one who was bent upon doing full justice to her "English style," whatever it might turn out to be. It proved to be something so very graceful that the critical audience of late arrivals was loud in its praise. Amongst the group, by the side of his old friend Advocat Schmidt, stood James Penwarden, who had been persuaded, rather against his will, to join the gay assembly.

"Will you not dance?" asked the old gentleman; "I will introduce you to a steward, and he will find you a partner."

"No, thank you," replied Jim; "I am content to look on."

"Cannot understand what the young men all wish. There is my son over there says the same thing; but, at least, he has found a pretty girl to talk to. *Ach! Guten Abend, meine Damen!*" and the old gentleman went off to welcome a new arrival. Jim was tired after his long journey, and perhaps a little lazy; anyhow he was quite satisfied to be left alone in the dark corner, from which he could see all that was going on. "I wonder if there's a chance of Hannah being here to-night," he thought, as a girl with yellow hair passed close by; "no, I suppose not; Fräulein Schwarz would hardly come to this sort of thing. How thoroughly they are all enjoying themselves! I wonder, by-the-bye,

what old Dr. Burton would think of this festivity; he is one of those beings who could be bounded in a nut-shell, and rather expects other people to be of the same opinion. Curious how he dislikes Hannah being over here. I wonder——there's a handsome couple!"

A tall Uhlan and a fair-haired girl in a white dress; she was smiling at something her partner had just said; her cheeks were flushed rosy red with excitement. For the moment Hannah had forgotten her fright in the wood, Ada's letter, and her troubles of the afternoon. The dancing and the music had dragged her out of her sad thoughts, or rather, she had voluntarily dismissed them, and had made up her mind that she would enjoy herself to her heart's content, for this evening at least, let come what would to-morrow.

"She is English surely," thought Jim; "it can't be Hannah. I verily believe, though, it is!" He had not recognised her as she whirled past; but now that she was standing still and looking up at her partner, he knew the old smile and the earnest gray eyes, unchanged since she was a little girl. He was near enough to hear their conversation.

"I must take you back to the Frau Doctorin, Fräulein Hannah, much as I regret that our dance is over. You will honour me with the next?"

"Yes, it is a polka. But first, I don't want you to think that I am ungrateful—about this afternoon, I mean. I hope you understand?"

"She put her hand on the Lieutenant's arm, and they walked away together.

"Dear little girl!" commented Jim from his dark corner; "it never occurred to me that she would grow up so pretty. Where on earth can that Uhlan have sprung from? Magnificent looking fellow, to be sure. Dr. Burton need have no fears on the subject of Hannah's welfare; she looks very happy. That earnest way of hers is perfectly charming; now she has gone back to her seat by the little lady, that Advocat Schmidt said just now was the most amiable woman in Bernsdorf. Shall I go and introduce myself?" He got up and pushed away the form that was in front of him. "No! not to-night, I think. She is thoroughly happy talking to the Uhlan, and won't want to be interrupted. To-morrow morning I'll go and call the first thing." Jim went out into the lovely summer night, lighted his pipe, and strolled leisurely homewards.

After an hour or so the returning carriages began to roll along the Chausée; the Friedrichs Wald *réunion* began early in order that the guests might get away in good time. The Frau Doctorin, having been a spectator merely, was not in the least fatigued. "Look, *liebe* Hannah!" she exclaimed in the most lively of voices; "there is your old friend and admirer, Advocat Schmidt, waiting at his doorway to wish us good-night."

"*Gute Nacht, meine Herrschaft,*" shouted the Advocat; "*glüchliche Reise!*"

"*Schönen Dank; Gute Nacht!*" responded the Frau Doctorin. Hannah bowed, and strained her weary eyes to catch a glimpse of a second figure, coming along the garden, and waving his hat.

"He looks like somebody I ought to know," she said; "but it's so dark I can't see."

She made a pillow of the Frau Doctorin's dust-cloak, and was fast asleep long before they reached Bernsdorf.

Early the following morning Jim Penwarden announced his intention of walking into town; he should like to see the old place again, and he had a call to make. "As you wish," my dear boy," said the Advocat; "do as you wish while you are with us." He then proceeded to satisfy his conscience on the score of hospitality by reminding his guest (for the third time) that dinner would be served at two o'clock, and that his wife would be distressed if he did not return in good time.

Jim knew the customs of Bernsdorf, and that it was against etiquette to pay a call before eleven o'clock or after half-past one, so he walked about till the church clock struck twelve, and then presented himself at No. 32 Augusta Strasse, and inquired for Miss Tarne.

"Is not at home," answered Elise, looking at the strange gentleman with curiosity.

"When is she expected?"

"She is not expected at all. She has gone to the sea with Frau Doctorin Blumenlaube."

"Is Fräulein Schwarz at home?"

"No; Fräulein has gone to the station to see Fräulein Hannah off. The train went at twelve o'clock." By this time Elise had come to the conclusion that she much preferred the Herr Lieutenant to this foreign gentlemen with his eternal questioning. "Frau Schwarz is not at home either," was her next gratuitous piece of information.

The gentleman still waited in an undecided fashion. "I am sorry," he said at last; "how long did you say Miss Tarne would stay away?"

Elise had not specified any length of time, and did not really know anything about it, but she answered promptly, "A month or more."

"Thank you," said Jim, giving her his card.

"Adieu," said Elise, as she shut the door, and then went into the drawing-room, to see the last of the retreating visitor. "Certainly an Englishman," she remarked, "and very *splenig*, but he looks melancholy. I wish I had told him that Fräulein Hannah would return to-morrow!"

"If I had had a notion," thought Jim Penwarden, as he walked back to Friedrichs Wald, tearing along the dusty road in order to be in time for the two-o'clock dinner; "if I had had a notion of this, of *course* I should have spoken to her last night; how-

ever, it's no good worrying about what can't be helped." With this he quickened his steps, regardless of the dust and scorching sun. But in spite of his philosophic reflections he continued to "worry" all the way back to Friedrichs Wald.

CHAPTER IV.

HANNAH spent a very happy fortnight under the Frau Doctorin's motherly wing, growing rosy and sunburnt in the delicious sea air, and laying up a store of health for her first experiences of a German winter. Towards the end of her visit Dr. Blumenlaube arrived, bringing with him a young friend, none other than Lieutenant von Felsensee. Otto presented himself before his hostess in the character of a homeless wanderer, who had a few days' leave, and did not know where to spend it. "I gladly accepted the invitation of your *Herr Gemahl*," he explained, "to join your agreeable family circle. It is too far for me to visit my mother in Pomerania, as you may imagine. Berlin is indeed a wilderness at this time of year, and I cannot sufficiently express my gratitude to you for taking compassion on my loneliness."

This was the very way to win the Frau Doctorin's heart (if the handsome Lieutenant had not already done so); she was glad, too, to have a young companion for Hannah, and not altogether without hope

that a little romance might be the result of throwing the young people together. "Then it will not be my fault," she thought, exultingly; "if my husband arranges these things, well and good. I had no share in the invitation."

The very first evening, Otto made some allusion to Hannah's narrow escape in the wood, and of course the Frau Doctorin wished to have a long account of it from the Lieutenant himself; she was sure that Hannah, after the fashion of her countrywomen, had made too light of this serious adventure. And "serious" it sounded as related by Otto; he enhanced his story by giving a vivid description of the remorse of the landlord when accused of neglecting to cover over the well. "Indeed," said Otto, passing his fingers through the ends of his fair moustache, "so penitent was the man that I promised to make no formal complaint, provided that he made good his error immediately. Therefore, honoured Frau Doctorin, it must remain a secret between you and me and Fräulein Hannah."

"*Du grosser Himmel!*" exclaimed the Frau Doctorin, with uplifted hands. "To think what the dear girl has escaped! And so calm and self-possessed all the evening! It is marvellous what these islanders can go through! Yet no one could say that she was without heart."

"Certainly not," responded Otto warmly; "she was afraid only of distressing her kind chaperon."

"The dear girl! Now, shall we join her on the terrace-walk? She is there, I see, with my husband."

"It is perfectly lovely out of doors," cried Hannah, running to meet them; "I am so glad you have come out. Don't you find this a delightful change after town, Herr von Felsensee?"

He certainly seemed to find it very delightful, and proposed another little turn round the garden, when the Frau Doctorin and her husband retired to the shelter of a summer-house.

The garden was large. The two young people walked up and down the terrace that at high tide was washed by the sea. Just now the tide was low, and they could only hear the rush and swell of the waves at a distance.

"I love this old walk," said Hannah, seating herself on a jutting-out stone; "and the roar of the waves does so remind me of Yarmouth; they seem to sweep in just in the same way. Do you know Yarmouth?"

Otto was sorry to be obliged to confess that a visit to England was a pleasure to come; all his knowledge of that interesting country was obtained from reading.

"I used to stay at Yarmouth when I was a little girl; and do you know (it's very silly to say so) this place has often made me feel melancholy, because it reminded me of my last visit there."

"I do not think that we can always account for our reasons for melancholy."

"I can account for it this time, only I could not tell the Frau Doctorin. She is so very, very good to me, and would be so unhappy if she knew I was vexed. The day that we came down here a great friend of mine (I mean, the nephew of a great friend of mine) came to see me at Augusta Strasse just after I had gone, and I had not seen him since we were at Yarmouth. It really was an unlucky chance, wasn't it? though I did read somewhere, the other day, that there is no such thing as chance or luck."

"You would find but few people, Fräulein Hannah, who would agree with that statement.

"I don't know," said Hannah, resting her head against the back of an old garden chair; "I expect people must take their fate into their own hands to a certain extent. It would never answer to sit still and talk about luck, when one ought to be up and doing."

This was an idiom of which Otto did not quite grasp the meaning, but he looked at Hannah with undisguised admiration.

"Of course," she went on, "very often one is so helpless. If I had had the least idea that I should have missed Mr. Penwarden I should have begged leave to stay in Bernsdorf another day. It does seem hard."

"Mr. Penwarden is——?"

"Yes; the friend who used to be so kind to me. I *am* sorry. For the first time since I have been in Germany, I feel the least little bit home-sick."

"That is very bad, Fräulein Hannah. Yet this is a beautiful scene; I will advise you—do you allow me to advise?"

"Please do."

"I will advise you to think no more of the inevitable; that is all over and gone. Let us enjoy what we have got, now at the present moment."

"I daresay you are right—I'm sure you are about the bygones; but it is surely well to be a little prepared for trouble; that may come at any minute. You must not think that I am grumbling; *indeed* I don't mean to do that."

"*Mein Fräulein,*" interrupted Otto, "I beg that you will not imagine that I suggest a word of blame. I can only wonder at the gravity with which you view subjects which are rose-coloured to other young ladies of your age."

"I daresay," said Hannah, twisting her white shawl round her neck, "that you do not know at all how old I am. Guess!"

She was looking full at Otto, with a half-amused expression in her eyes. At this direct appeal he hesitated a second, and then said: "Since you ask me, *geehrtes Fräulein,* I should say sixteen, or at the most seventeen."

Hannah broke out into a laugh; it reached the

ears of Frau Doctorin Blumenlaube, and caused her to congratulate herself on her young friend's good spirits.

"You are quite wrong, Herr Lieutenant; I am nearly nineteen. Now you will not wonder any more at my sage remarks on things in general. Perhaps you thought I was one of the pupils in Fräulein Schwarz's pension?"

"I thought so at first, till I heard the contrary from our kind hostess."

"I am afraid I'm not an experienced teacher," said Hannah, with her face turned towards the distant sea; "but the girls seem to like their English lessons."

"We cannot be astonished at that, Fräulein Hannah."

"Do you think so? I had great doubts as to how I should get on at first, but Fräulein Schwarz has helped me. She knows how much I want to stay in Germany."

"I am rejoiced from my heart that you so appreciate our fatherland; but your relations—your family? You must forgive me; how can they permit such a long absence?"

"I have very few relations—near relations—only a brother and his wife, and my brother is at the other side of the world. I have got to learn to be independent, and the only way appears to me to teach."

"It is a high ambition," said Otto, wondering

where on earth Hannah's brother could be to allow his only sister (and so charming a girl) to enter on an arduous path alone in a foreign country; "it appears to me that you have everything in your favour for success."

"I have found a great many friends here," said Hannah smiling, "and I have left some in England" ("and one has followed you to Germany," thought Otto, flinging away the end of his cigar). "Now, I won't tire you any more with talking about myself; let us go back to the house. I expect supper will soon be ready. I hope so; this place makes me *very* hungry."

Otto got up from his seat and walked with Hannah along the terrace; he had the feeling in his heart that he should like to hear her talk about herself for ever. By and by the Doctor joined them; Otto slipped behind and went back to the stone wall; this English girl was a mystery to him, everything that she did or said was delightful and fascinating. How brave she was! and she had no pride, but spoke out just as she thought; so it seemed to Otto. "Take care, take care," he said half aloud; "thou art on the brink of falling in love with a girl without a thaler, who talks about being independent. Confound the money!" he exclaimed, knocking some loose stones from the parapet on to the beach below. "I like her just exactly as she is. I would have nothing changed!"

He walked restlessly up and down the terrace, half regretting that he had induced Dr. Blumenlaube to invite him to the home for these few days; far across the sea he could almost fancy he heard his mother's voice, remonstrating with him on his folly, and with that thought came another, which was not soothing in his present frame of mind. How about Cécile?

Cécile was the name of his bride-elect.

Fräulein Schwarz was well pleased to welcome Hannah back, and congratulated her on her blooming appearance. This was a compliment that Hannah could not return, for Rosa looked pale and worried; however she said nothing about her own affairs, and only seemed anxious to be cheerful and settle down to the regular routine of school-work. Frau Schwarz was not so reticent; on the very first opportunity, when she had Hannah alone, she partially unburdened her mind.

"Dear Miss, let us put the Schiller aside for to-day. I have so much to tell you; come and bring your chair to the window. *Ach!* How you have improved since you came from London, and you grow still, I believe! There, by the flower-stand, you will be out of the draught; it gets cold in September—no?"

Hannah was not cold. Bernsdorf was warmer than the sea-side, she said.

"*Ja*, I can believe that, but, nevertheless, we must soon think of heating the rooms. You are young and do not feel the cold. Tell me, how do you find my Rosa, *liebe* Miss?"

"She looks tired and unhappy," began Hannah.

"That is just it. You have such a sympathising eye! I knew you would observe; I said to the Rosa that our little friend would feel for her. You remember I have told you of Dr. Brandt?" Hannah might well remember, as it was the good old lady's favourite topic of conversation.

"Yes? So he came for one day only; he is so pressed for time, and his pupils may not be put off. He was in the best of spirits. *Ja wohl*, he is a good man, and devoted to my daughter! He had heard of an appointment; he would not tell us what or where, in case of failure. It is good. I think *now* the long engagement will at last be at an end; he thinks so also, and the Rosa. Just before you arrived, *liebe* Hannah, there arrived a letter from Dr. Brandt, and since that day Rosa has been as you see now. And worse still, she declares that the affair is broken off, that she has written the letter to say so, and has posted it with her own hands! Each day she watches for an answer, and there is none. What shall I think?"

The door opened abruptly, and Rosa came in, with an open letter in her hand; it needed but one

look at her face, to tell that she was the bearer of good news.

"Rosa! Is it all well arranged?"

"*Liebe* Mamma, is it so? as he says. Did you tell him that you would go with us anywhere, to America, if necessary? would it not grieve you to leave your old home?"

"Certainly, I told him so, and I mean it also. I would not be a hinderance, if I have my dear children, the whole world is the same to me. Is the appointment, then, in America, child?"

"No," said Rosa, putting the letter into her mother's hand, "but in Bavaria; will you go with us? I would never wish it, unless you wished it also."

At this the old lady burst into tears, and murmured something about her dear good daughter. Hannah was going to slip away quietly, but Rosa seized her hand, and declared that she must stay and hear the explanation. Edward had been appointed musical director at an Institution in Bavaria; this immediately placed him in a position to offer a comfortable home to Rosa and her mother. "For there never was a thought of separating us; I did not like to suggest that Mamma should go so far, and I wrote to say it would be better to break off the engagement. But in the meantime Edward knows the dear mother better than I do, and affirms that she will go."

"And I will, I will," cried the delighted old lady; "you do not get rid of me so easily."

At this Rosa fell into her mother's arms, and Hannah managed to steal away unobserved.

The excitement caused by this change of plan in the quiet household was not likely to die away.

There was indeed a great deal to arrange, as the school must be given up before the end of the quarter, and all preparations made for the wedding, and the subsequent move to the new home in the South. One thing only weighed upon Rosa's mind, and that was the parting with Hannah, whom she had come to regard in the light of a dear friend;—had she truly determined to remain in Germany? Yes; Hannah's mind was made up on that point; moreover, any return to Victoria Terrace was out of the question for the present. In her last letter Ada had said that she contemplated going abroad with Mrs. Digby to try and recruit her broken health and spirits. "I have no scruples about accepting the invitation," wrote Ada, "as I know you to be permanently settled in Germany; well, you have chosen for yourself, and I do not ask you to throw up your career."

For the moment, however, it seemed as if Hannah's career were likely to be a little checked; much as she wished to stay in Bernsdorf, it appeared to be impossible. There was no other school where a young English teacher would have had a chance

of being put on the staff, and after repeated failures, Hannah came to the conclusion that her best plan would be to go to Berlin, and stay with a friend of Frau Schwarz's till she should hear of something to do. The friend, Frau Mühlbach, had many years ago established an agency and a boarding-house for ladies.

Frau Doctorin Blumenlaube was much distressed when she heard of Hannah's intended departure, though she could not but rejoice at the good fortune that had befallen Frau Schwarz and her daughter.

"After all," she said to her husband, "Hannah is young and clever, and will make her way. I must ask her to stay with me after the wedding, and then we can start her for Berlin, as she wishes it; and we shall see what this agent can do for her." "I do not like it, wife," answered the Doctor, shaking his head; "you and Fräulein Rosa are too sanguine; I do not like the expedition to Berlin."

"Are you of that opinion?" asked the little lady, not without a thought of the handsome Lieutenant, who was so evidently deeply interested in her protegée. "If Hannah is not contented, she must return to us, till we find her a happy home. *Nicht wahr?*"

"As thou wilt, wife. The *Engländerin* is a dear girl, and would be a comfort to you in the long winter months."

The winter was indeed coming on fast; there

seemed to be very little autumn; the leaves turned yellow and fell off the trees. People began to talk of heating their rooms and putting double windows into the sashes. Frau Schwarz looked out her furs, and tried to persuade Hannah that she would catch her death of cold in her short English jacket. Before Christmas the pupils had all dispersed, and the preparations for the wedding were complete. Everything was to be as quiet and simple as possible, only Rosa stipulated that her bridal wreath must be made of sprigs from the little tree that had cheered her, so many years, in the path of hope. Hannah spent her last hours at Augusta Strasse snipping the myrtle-tree (neither Frau Schwarz nor her daughter had been able to do *that*) and weaving the wreath, as a last token of friendship for the bride. These were rather sad days for Hannah, after the bustle of the wedding was over; in spite of the kindness of her hostess, and a certain amount of gaiety and theatre-going, she felt restless and unhappy. This independence that she had thought so much of was a more difficult thing to grasp than she had imagined. Frau Mühlbach wrote in a desponding mood; there were so many young English ladies in Berlin; but she would do her best, and hoped that Miss Tarne would come to her in January; that would be the best time, and it was always advisable to be on the spot. Hannah, in her impatience, would have liked something more definite than this;

an appointment in Siberia was preferable to such uncertainty.

One afternoon, when the sky looked cold and gray, Hannah came into the drawing-room to find the Frau Doctorin dressed in her thick mantle and fur cape. "Dear Hannah, I was coming to seek you; I am obliged to visit a patient of the Doctor's. It is really unfortunate, when we expect Lieutenant von Felsensee to coffee; but he will not come till four o'clock, and I hope to return before that."

"I had forgotten all about the coffee party," answered Hannah; "can't you take me with you, Frau Doctorin? and we can leave a message for the Lieutenant."

"A message? No, that will not do. You must stay at home and receive my visitor; make yourself very amiable, and he will not miss me."

"I am *sure* he will," said Hannah, "or else he is not nearly such a nice man as I thought him. Shall I tie your veil for you?"

"If you please," said the Frau Doctorin, standing on tiptoe to kiss Hannah; "it is charming to have so skilful a lady's maid. No, do not come to the door! Adieu, dear child, adieu."

Hannah watched the fly drive off; then she went back to the table, and began putting her writing-case in order. She had kept most of the letters that she had received since she left London. Here were pages of crossed writing from

Ada, two or three short letters from Dr. Burton, a whole heap from Mrs. Penwarden, and one from Jim Penwarden. This last letter Hannah took up and read again—just a few lines, written in the old friendly manner (they had been correspondents at intervals all these years), to say how disappointed he had been to miss seeing her at Augusta Strasse; but that he hoped they should meet before long; he was likely to be in Germany again in the winter. Hannah folded up the letters carefully, and tied them into bundles, on each of which she wrote the initials of the writer. As she held the pencil still in her fingers, and scribbled a pattern on the edge of Jim's note, she began to wonder how long it would be before she heard again; she did hope he would not go back to Africa without letting her know. With a sudden pang, a great sense of her own loneliness came over her, a desperate longing to be home again in England, if only for a few days; she longed to see the old house at Highgate, where she had spent the happiest days of her life. For the first time it struck her that there was not one human being within hundreds of miles, who would take any interest in the story of those old days, not one who would care to hear about Mrs. Penwarden, or that sad time in Hannah's short life, which stood out sharp and clear in her memory. "They are very kind," she thought; "but they are all so new and strange. They can't really care. Suppose I get ill?

Suppose I die?" She had been sitting on a low chair, close to the high stove; it pleased her to think that this was the warmest place in the room, in spite of Dr. Blumenlaube's protestations to the contrary; the letters were in a heap on her lap. For some minutes Hannah sat motionless, her hands clasped at the back of her head, her eyes fixed on a hideous bead-work cushion, with two magenta-coloured tassels at each corner. With one of her sudden impulses (in years gone by Jane had disrespectfully talked of Miss Hannah's bouncing ways) she jumped up, flinging the papers far and wide on the floor. "I am the most ungrateful, mean-spirited person that ever existed. I don't deserve the friendliness I meet with. I will *not* sit here, and fret any longer. What's the good of going miles out of the way to shake hands with imaginary miseries? I'm worse than Ada!" This thought proved a healthful tonic. "I'll go and ask cook to let me make a cake. (Hannah picked up the letters, and put them on the table.) There will be time before the Lieutenant comes. No! there he is!"

Hannah took one look at herself in the glass, to be sure that her collar was tidy; she wished her face didn't look so red, but it couldn't be helped; she would sit with her back to the light, and Herr von Felsensee wouldn't notice anything; on the whole, she was glad he had come so early—he would be more entertaining than making a cake.

Hannah made the necessary apologies for Frau Doctorin Blumenlaube. She had seen enough of Bernsdorf customs to know that she must beg the Lieutenant to leave his cap and sword in the outer room, or else that he would keep the one in his hand, and the other at his side, during the whole visit. Thinking that she had conducted herself with great decorum, she begged him to sit down.

Otto von Felsensee had sharp eyes. "I am afraid I am disturbing you, Fräulein Hannah," he said, glancing at the heap of papers; "you do not look very well; have you been ill?"

"I am quite well, thank you. I was only putting my desk tidy. I am delighted to see you," she added, thinking that she had been too abrupt; "you have been away, haven't you?"

"Yes. I paid my mother a short visit, and she wishes me to return at Christmas. I do not know if that is possible; in fact my plans are undecided." Otto paused, his plans indeed were very undecided. His mother had invited Cécile to spend a few days with her after Christmas, and had urged his coming to meet her; it was time that he should take some steps towards making a favourable impression on the young heiress. "You will lose your chance, Otto," she had said, affectionately; "if you loved any one else, I should say no more; but as it is, such a pretty girl, and you utterly neglect her! I tell you, my son, she will marry another." This

did not exactly suit Otto's views either, so he kissed his mother, and said that he would arrange everything just as she wished; and here he was, a few weeks later, with all his resolutions entirely overthrown by the mere sight of the Frau Doctorin's *Engländerin!*

Hannah looked up in surprise; it was something quite new to hear Otto stammer and break off in the middle of a sentence—about such a trivial affair too! She must try and set him more at his ease; why! in the summer they had talked together like friends; perhaps he was offended because the Frau Doctorin had gone out.

"I am looking forward to my first Christmas in Germany. We are going to dine with Dr. Blumenlaube's father; he lives at Friedrichs Wald."

"I remember the house quite well; it is a beautiful place. Then you will see something of the Bernsdorf season, Fräulein Hannah. I hope we may meet at many more dances."

Hannah shook her head. "I am going away directly after Christmas. I shall be so sorry, but it can't be helped."

"I had no idea that you intended leaving us so soon. Can you not be persuaded to change your mind? This is very sudden!"

"It was settled some weeks ago, before I left Augusta Strasse. I am going to Berlin."

"*So?* That is not far. You may easily return from Berlin."

Hannah did not answer; she longed to tell him that there was very little chance of her returning for many months, and to ask him if he knew Frau Mühlbach; just at that moment she would have immensely liked a little advice and sympathy. Otto was so strong and so kind, he must surely be able to help her; but, on the other hand, she had not forgotten how seriously he had taken her confidences on the terrace-walk; he had thought she was a little schoolgirl; he would be sure not to approve of this new scheme, and besides, why should she worry him with her own perplexities and difficulties when the Frau Doctorin had left the strictest injunctions that she was to amuse her guest?

The maid came in with a tray containing coffee and cakes. This gave Hannah an excuse for getting up, making a clatter with the cups and saucers, and changing the conversation.

"Did you like the new singer at the concert last night, Herr von Felsensee?"

"Yes, immensely; at least, not so much as I had expected. Fräulein Hannah, you will hear some finer artistes than ours, at Berlin."

Hannah looked up quickly. Otto was twisting his fair moustache with one hand, while he turned over the leaves of the Frau Doctorin's album (which he had seen dozens of times before) with the other.

"Yes, if I were going to stay in Berlin; but I

hope that won't be the case. Shall I give you a cup of coffee? I forget if you take sugar."

"Very good indeed, thank you; just as you give it me. *Mein Fräulein*, pardon my seeming curiosity, but may I be allowed to ask where you go on your departure from Berlin?"

"I don't know," said Hannah in desperation. It was impossible, it seemed, to avoid the subject. What was the matter with the Lieutenant this afternoon?

"I beg a thousand pardons. I apologise for my want of courtesy." Otto put down his coffee, and got up from the table. Hannah looked at him in amazement; she was very sorry to have vexed him.

"Pray don't do anything of the kind; there is nothing to apologise for. I really don't know where I am going to next, and I thought it wouldn't interest you to talk about my affairs. It is my fault for being so abrupt."

Otto's wrath was appeased in a moment. "Your fault? Not at all. But you could not possibly suppose that it would *not* interest me to hear about yourself?"

He was thoroughly in earnest now. He had forgotten all about his mother and Cécile; this was no passing love affair; he must and would come to an understanding with the girl opposite. Was she playing with him? Surely not. Did she care one little scrap about him? Were all *Engländerinen*

like icicles? Otto had his share of vanity (like other handsome men); it was an insufferable thought that an unsophisticated little schoolgirl was coquetting with him, drawing him on for her own amusement. His blue eyes literally flashed as he repeated his last question, "Do you not know how much it interests me to hear your plans?"

If Hannah had looked at him then, she must have seen that he was in earnest, but she was fiddling with the spirit-lamp that would *not* burn properly. "It is *very* good of you to say so; and we were such friends in the summer that I had intended to ask your——"

"For Fräulein Hannah Tarne." The servant opened the door with a jerk, and put a telegram into Hannah's hand.

"You will excuse me," she said hurriedly, and tore open the envelope. The telegram was from James Penwarden, Grand Hotel, Paris. "Let me know your address in Berlin. Hope to see you there next month."

"Look!" exclaimed Hannah, clasping her hands; her eyes were radiant with happiness. "Isn't that a delightful piece of news? I shan't be alone in Berlin after all. Mr. Penwarden (he's the friend I told you of) will be able to advise me what to do; and I needn't be a trouble to any one."

"*Ich gratulire Ihnen, mein geehrtes Fräulein,*" said Otto, bowing stiffly.

"Nothing could have pleased me better! It will take away all the desolate feeling at once, to know that I have one of my own people to talk to. But, Herr von Felsensee, you are not drinking your coffee, and do have some of this cake. If I do not look after her visitor properly the Frau Doctorin will be so angry with me!"

"Fräulein Hannah!" said Otto, looking at her without a shadow of vexation in his beautiful blue eyes; "I do not imagine that it would be possible for any one to be seriously angry with you, at least not for any length of time."

He took the cake she handed him, and drank his second cup of coffee (this time without sugar), and Hannah, who was really desirous to do the right thing, chatted away merrily till the Frau Doctorin returned.

"Hannah, *bestes Kind!* how did you get on?" was the Frau Doctorin's first question after Otto had taken his departure—he had an appointment at five o'clock, he said, at the other end of the town. "What have you said to the Herr Lieutenant to make him look so pale and distressed?"

"I?" asked Hannah in surprise. "Nothing! I didn't know that he was pale. But, dear Frau Doctorin, *do* read my telegram!"

CHAPTER V.

It was snowing hard. The roof of the house and the roofs of the surrounding farm-buildings were several inches deep in snow; it hung on the sashes of the windows, and drifted up the garden-walks in heaps. The air was full of snow, falling silently and unceasingly, as it had been falling for hours and hours. The broad road that led past the barns and outhouses to the dwelling-house, had a wall of snow on either side of it; it had been piled up the day before, after the great storm had lulled a little. There was no storm to-day; it had worn itself out apparently; there was no wind, only dead silence and perpetual snow. Except for the darkness, it would have been hard to complain of any discomfort, arising from the severe weather, inside the house. Fräulein Elisabeth Linden, sitting in the drawing-room, with its heated stove and double-glass windows, forgot all about the snow outside. She had her knitting in her hand, but her eyes were fixed on the newspaper before her. It was a fashionable ladies' journal; and while Fräulein Elisabeth was

engaged in the complicated process of turning a heel, so skilful a workwoman was she, that she could, at the same time, read the directions for the construction of various articles of fancywork which (according to the journal) would make elegant and inexpensive presents for the approaching season of Christmas. Elisabeth Linden had a very straight back, smooth straight hair, regular features, and small brown eyes; her thin lips gave a pinched appearance to her countenance; on the whole, she was not a genial-looking person.

There was a sofa in the room, and a comfortable arm-chair placed close to the window, but screened from any stray draughts of cold air by a thick woollen curtain. However, Fräulein Linden preferred the small upright chair by the side of the table in the middle of the room; there was nothing here to distract her attention; the sock grew under her busy fingers, and she had already mastered the contents of several pages of journal, when a heavy step in the passage caused her to raise her eyes from the paper.

A tall elderly man came into the room; he wore a gray shooting coat faced with green, his thick boots reached nearly to his knees; these, as well as the coat, were speckled with lumps of ice and snow. He had a long beard that covered the entire lower part of his face; his forehead was wrinkled and furrowed with many cares, but his eyes (not unlike

those of the lady in shape and colour) twinkled with a kindliness that you looked for in vain in hers.

"Elisabeth," he said, pausing to wipe some of the snow from his boots, "Cécile is very late, I have been expecting the sledge for this hour past."

"Yes," said his sister, without getting up or showing the slightest interest in this piece of information; "the Cécile is often late."

"The snow has begun again; it is a horrible evening; one can trust Fritz, or I should begin to be anxious, it is so dark."

He *was* anxious already; he walked to the window and looked out, walked back again and turned to his sister; but she had taken up her journal and vouchsafed no further answer.

"She wished to go," he continued; "I think there can be no harm; the horses know their way, and Fritz is trustworthy. Dear child! she is so desirous to make everything comfortable for this *Engländerin.* But what a day to choose for a shopping expedition!"

"You allowed it, Conrad," observed his sister drily.

"*Ja wohl, liebe* Elisabeth, but—— here she comes! here she comes!"

Herr Linden's sharp eyes had descried a black speck on the waste of snow—a sledge moving very fast; for a few seconds he stood watching, still undecided, and then went out to meet it at the hall-

door. A low sledge, drawn by a pair of black horses, who came galloping along the frozen road, their bells ringing and their long manes flying in the frosty air. The coachman was perched on a tiny back seat, so constructed that he could jump up and down conveniently, and run along by the side of the horses when he wanted to warm his frozen feet, or thought it necessary to maintain the equilibrium of the sledge by doing so.

In the front seat was a figure muffled in a fur jacket and so many wraps, that it was difficult at the first glance to see that it was a young girl, with bright dark eyes, who was peeping from behind the shelter of an enormous woollen shawl.

"Good evening, dear Papa!" she cried, as Fritz checked the horses in their course exactly at the right moment, and the sledge stood motionless at the hall-door.

"Good evening, my Cécile; you are late. I was getting anxious. Aunt Elisabeth was anxious."

"Are you sure of that, Papachen? Well, I am glad to be home again, though Fritz has been very careful." Here Fritz grinned, and showed his white teeth. "We have had no mishap at all. You must come and lift me out. I cannot move."

Cécile might well say that she could not move; her feet were tucked into a bag lined with sheepskin, and an immense rug had been strapped across the sledge from one side to the other; she wore in

addition to her jacket, a fur cape and a scarlet hood, tightly tied under her chin, and surmounted by the shawl that protected her face from the drifting snow. It was a pretty bright face, with gleaming eyes, that looked out of the scarlet hood; it was a pretty slight figure, divested of its wrappings, that danced round the large hall. Cécile Linden had dark wavy hair, pink cheeks, a very decided little mouth, with a short upper lip; she was said to resemble her dead mother, who had been a Frenchwoman and a beauty; but when she was not talking or laughing (and occasionally Cécile *was* silent for a few minutes), by some mysterious freak of nature, she had a look which recalled Aunt Elisabeth in her severest mood.

"I have several letters for you, dear Papachen," announced Cécile, putting her arm affectionately on her father's, "and one for Tante Elisabeth from the *Engländerin.* I know her handwriting quite well, and I have ordered the sweetest little chair to stand in her room, and *ach!* many things besides; but you will not scold, *liebes gutes Papachen!* Fritz began to be quite nervous (he is so afraid of you), because I had so many commissions in town. 'What will the gracious master say, Fräuleinchen, if we arrive after sunset?'" Cécile screwed up her red lips to represent Fritz's gruff way of speaking, and stroked an imaginary beard.

"Fritz was in the right, my dear daughter. I

do not like you to run any risk, and he would naturally be to blame in case of an accident."

Cécile tossed her chin and laughed: "But there *was* no accident, *siehst Du?* And there will be none where I am concerned, I bear a charmed life; therefore, make thyself happy, Papa. Have you spent your afternoon pleasantly? You tell me nothing of yourself."

"You leave me no time, Cécile," answered her father, smiling; "but how about your aunt? She is a little disturbed at your long absence. Shall we go to her?"

"Disturbed! Cross, you mean, Papachen! *So!*" as he shook his head, and put his finger to his lips. "She will not be pleased to receive this letter from Berlin either."

A door was partly opened, and Aunt Elisabeth's voice was heard calling Cécile.

"You are very late," was Aunt Elisabeth's greeting — the same words that her brother had used; but how much lies in the manner of saying a few words of remonstrance!

Cécile shrugged her shoulders, and answered saucily, "Have you waited coffee, Tante? I am afraid you must be very tired of watching for the sledge!"

"I have had my coffee. You know, Cécile, my rule is not to wait for any one; yours will be served in the dining-room. Now tell me, as you

are so bent upon having this strange girl in the house, when do you wish her to come? You do not desire her to stay here for your marriage, *nein*?"

"My marriage! *beste Tante,*" repeated Cécile, holding her cold hands against the warm tiles of the stove; "I am not yet *verlobt!* I do not think of being married at present, but if the *Engländerin* is amiable, she can remain here with you for years. You would miss me, you know; you would be dull."

"I am never dull, Cécile," said Tante Elisabeth, taking up her knitting.

"Do you never weary of your own society, Tante? Well, I envy you. I get very tired of myself and other people also."

"A well-regulated mind is never dull; it finds constant employment, and the time flies unheeded."

Cécile pouted; this was a subject upon which she and Tante Elisabeth invariably disagreed. "Here is a letter for you, *Täntchen,*" she said, after a little pause; "and I suppose the *Engländerin* will answer the question that you asked me just now. For my part, I hope she will come at once."

Cécile produced the letter, with a wicked little smile on her pretty face; she knew that Tante Elisabeth could not read a word of it. The whole of the correspondence, therefore, had passed through her hands, and she had translated it to her aunt. Perhaps for that reason, the elder lady had from the first set her face against the arrival of the

proposed companion, but it was no use setting her face against Cécile's whims; Herr Linden could refuse his darling nothing. Cécile had once before wished for a young French lady to stay with her. She had unfortunately quarrelled with the French lady after a very short trial; and now she had expressed a desire to have an English lady, and as her will was law, Tante Elisabeth had reluctantly entered into the scheme, not without many warnings that nothing good would come of it.

It was such a stiff little letter that Cécile took the liberty of translating it very freely. The English lady said in a very few words that if she did not hear to the contrary, she should leave Berlin by the eight o'clock train on Wednesday morning, and hoped to reach Robewitz the same evening. She thanked Fräulein Linden for her kind letter, and begged leave to remain hers faithfully, Hannah Tarne.

"What a comfort that I brought those things to-day!" said Cécile; "the room would never have been ready in time."

"Ready!" exclaimed Fräulein Linden; rising from her seat; "I must go and give orders for it at once. It is as well that I had the new covers made in the autumn! Nevertheless I am astonished that the Miss should come in such haste. Had we not mentioned next week for her arrival?"

"*Next* week? are you sure, *liebe Tante?*" asked

Cécile, with the most innocent air in the world; she had written the letter, and could have repeated it by heart. "*So,* we must do our best, and I will help to-morrow morning, if you like." This was a great concession for Cécile to make, as her indifference on the subject of housekeeping had long been a source of grief to her aunt. "And, *liebe Tante?*"

"What is it, Cécile? you are entangling my wool."

"Dearest, sweetest, best of aunts, promise me one, one little favour, just a tiny favour!"

"*Na?*" Fräulein Linden was fond of her niece in her demure fashion, and it was hard to resist that pleading voice.

"Be very kind and amiable to my *Engländerin* when she comes, or perhaps she will become homesick and miserable."

"Are you thinking of the *Französinn,* child?"

Cécile blushed. "That was so long ago," she said; "before I was confirmed; now I am grown up and have become otherwise. Wilt thou promise? Thou hast such a good heart."

"I will do my best," replied Tante Elisabeth, who was not insensible to Cécile's adept flattery. "Go now, my niece, and drink your coffee. I hear the father coming."

Hannah sat alone in a dimly-lighted room. It was bitterly cold, and the muslin curtains literally waved backwards and forwards, so strong was the

draught that found its way through the badly-fitting windows. Hannah had not been a month in Berlin, and she was already rejoicing at the thought of setting off again on her travels to-morrow. Frau Mühlbach had been successful in finding an engagement for Hannah much sooner than she had dared to expect. She was a kind-hearted woman, who looked faded and worn-out (as indeed she was), after twenty years of constant economy and rigid attention to domestic details. She had at present only two boarders besides Hannah—a young girl from Leipzig, with a strong Saxon accent, and a middle-aged English lady, who had come to Berlin with five pounds in her pocket and a fixed determination to learn the language. This resolution she confided to Hannah the very first evening, in the worst possible German; also that she had taken a vow not to speak a word of English while she was on the Continent; many people had already mistaken her for a Prussian, she said, and Hannah did not venture to contradict the statement, much as she would have liked to indulge in an English chat. She was very dull at the boarding-house, for Frau Mühlbach was perpetually engaged in her agency and her household, and though the Fräulein from Saxony was good-nature itself, she and Hannah found the greatest difficulty in understanding each other. To-night Hannah had been left in solitary state in the drawing-room, as she expected a visitor. She was very cold, and the

small iron stove did not give out much heat, so she walked up and down the room and shivered. To-morrow night, if all went well, she would have reached her new home at Robewitz; she wondered what it would be like, and whether it would be as cold in the country as it was in Berlin. "Fräulein Linden writes kind letters; she must be a nice person," thought Hannah; "if her niece is at all like her, perhaps we shall get on very well together. I wish it wasn't quite such a long way off. I wish the train didn't start *quite* so early. Oh! and I wish I had got a fairy looking-glass, and could take a peep at these people; it would be *such* a comfort to know what colour the girl's hair is! Perhaps she won't like me, and oh! perhaps I shan't like her." At this Hannah stopped and shivered again; she almost thought she would ask if the fire might be made up, though she knew that it was contrary to the rules of the house.

A knock at the door. "*Ein Herr,*" said a voice.

"*Herein!*" cried Hannah.

The door opened slowly, and the gentleman appeared. Hannah made a rush towards him and stopped short. He wore a thick greatcoat and an enormous comforter; he looked pale and fagged as if he had just come from a long journey; could this possibly be Jim Penwarden? No doubt about it when he smiled and held out his hand: "Have you forgotten me after all these years?"

"No; oh no!" cried Hannah, recovering herself and coming forward, ashamed of having doubted for an instant whether this could be her old friend; "I am so very glad to see you. Come and sit down. How is Mrs. Penwarden?"

Jim said that she was quite well when she wrote last, and sent her love.

"Thank you," said Hannah.

There was a little pause, only for a few seconds, but quite long enough to make them both painfully aware of the fact.

"I came straight from the railway, without waiting to go to the hotel. I could not get away from Paris before."

"I did hope you would have come before," said Hannah, twisting the fringe of the table-cloth as she spoke; "I am going to Pomerania to-morrow—to-morrow early."

"Yes, I know; you told me. Can't it possibly be put off?"

"I don't think so. The agent, Frau Mühlbach, says that it is an excellent thing for me; the Lindens are people she has known for years, and it won't do to put them off."

"Have you asked her?"

Hannah nodded. After all the years that she had looked forward to this meeting, it was going to end in disappointment. Jim was saying everything that was proper and kind, but he was altogether

different. Did old friends always meet like this after a long absence? She had fancied that they would have so much to say to each other; and now? She almost wished that Frau Mühlbach or the English lady would come in, just to make a little break. This second silence was unendurable. She *must* say something; her remark was hardly a happy one. "If I had met you in the street I shouldn't have known you, Mr. Penwarden, you look so——"

"So much older?"

"Yes," said downright Hannah, "and so different; but everybody must change in six years. I have grown tall, you see; taller than Ada."

"You are not looking so well as you did in the summer. I am afraid Berlin does not agree with you as well as Bernsdorf, Miss Tarne."

"I am quite well, thank you," said Hannah decidedly. What induced him to call her Miss Tarne? That was really *too* absurd! "I was very happy in Bernsdorf. I knew so many people there; and in the summer they took me about a good deal, and I enjoyed myself immensely. Have you been to Bernsdorf lately? I suppose Frau Doctorin Blumenlaube told you about me; what a pity you didn't come till the very day we left!"

"I got there the day before in the afternoon."

"I *am* sorry, and that was the afternoon we spent at Friedrichs Wald."

"Yes, I saw you there for a few minutes. My

old friend Advocat Schmidt insisted upon my going to the *réunion.* I wished afterwards that I had asked him to introduce me to the English lady he talked about, though I hadn't a notion who she was at the time. It was very unfortunate."

"It *was* unfortunate," said Hannah, opening her eyes wide with astonishment. That was all she said, but she was thinking, "it was very very unkind not to come and speak to me." And Jim was thinking, "Poor little girl! she has got back the old distressed look that she had as a child. She is behaving beautifully, but she has evidently left her heart in Bernsdorf. It was ridiculous of me to expect her to be pleased to see me again!"

"I saw you were enjoying yourself very much. You were dancing with an officer; Schmidt did tell me his name, but I've forgotten it."

"Herr von Felsensee?"

"That's it! A fine looking man with a yellow moustache."

"He is handsome," said Hannah, "and very pleasant; I saw him very often afterwards, and liked him so much."

There was another pause. Jim was waiting for further confidences on the subject of Herr von Felsensee, but Hannah began to talk about Paris, and to ask whether he had made up his mind to stay in England.

"Eventually I shall settle in London, after I have

been back again to the Cape, but for the present I am a fixture in Berlin. It is too provoking that we should meet in this way, only for a few minutes."

"Yes," said Hannah, "very provoking."

They had both expressed their sorrow as to this contingency before. The conversation was not brilliant.

"Did you see any of my people when you were in London?"

"I saw Mrs. Tarne, and your old friend Dr. Burton. He is very anxious to hear from an eye-witness how you are looking."

"Dear old Dr. Burton! He came to see me off, and, I verily believe, would have liked to prevent me from coming."

"He appeared to think that perhaps you might not be happy in Germany—that you might change your mind, and, in fact, get home-sick." Jim looked round the comfortless room as he spoke, and wondered what Dr. Burton would think of her present home.

"Dr. Burton is the kindest person in the world, but he is apt to forget that I am not a baby any longer."

Hannah held herself very stiff and straight as she said this; perhaps that was because she felt that in another moment the tears *would* come into her eyes, and contradict all her fine statements. "You will see him again before I do, Mr. Penwarden; please tell him that I have banished all such childish sentiments as home-sickness, and—and——"

What was Hannah going to say next? The

mysterious voice of the invisible servant interrupted her at this point in her message: "will you please to come to supper?"

"I suppose I must go," said Jim, getting up; "but it's not late, and I hoped you would let me take you to the theatre to-night, just for a little treat, as we are such old friends, Miss Tarne."

"But you would be too tired after your long journey."

"Not the least scrap tired, and quite at your service."

"I will go and ask Frau Mühlbach. I'll be back directly." Hannah rushed into the next room with a sudden impulse of gladness; it would be delightful to have one evening's enjoyment, and then to-morrow she would turn her mind to stern duty. She would like to go with Jim; perhaps he hadn't meant to be unkind after all. Unfortunately Frau Mühlbach thought otherwise: "*Meine liebe* Miss," she said, "that is not etiquette for a young lady to visit the theatre escorted by a gentleman who is not a relation or a *Bräutigam;* though perhaps it is so? In that case I will make no objection."

"No!" exclaimed Hannah, flushing crimson, "certainly not. It's all a mistake. I will not go."

She left the room hastily to make the first excuse to Jim Penwarden that came into her head Frau Mühlbach advised her to stay at home; it was so late, and so very cold.

"Then I shall be at the station to-morrow to see you off."

"It is so early—eight o'clock."

"I am accustomed to early hours. Good-night, not good-bye. Are you quite sure that there is nothing I can do for you—that Dr. Burton can do, I mean; you are sure that you want to go to Robewitz?"

"Quite," said Hannah, without looking at him.

"It's not a bad part of the country. Linden is a well-known name. I made inquiries through our Berlin agent when you wrote to say where you were going."

"That was very good of you to give yourself so much trouble," observed Hannah icily. She could hear the Fräulein's loud voice proclaiming her astonishment that the *Engländerinen* had such extraordinary customs; she hoped Jim's ears were not so sharp as hers. With a sudden pang she remembered how Ruth had said that Jim would always help her, that Jim was so good; how was she treating him?

"I mustn't keep you from your supper any longer. Perhaps it might have knocked you up going to the theatre. Good-night again!" said Jim, just as if he had not heard Hannah's dignified little speech; "I shall see you to-morrow."

He was gone; and Hannah went back to the dining-room, and was greeted with a storm of

questions from the Fräulein, whose curiosity was fairly aroused as to the mysterious stranger. She was a kind-hearted little body, though wanting in tact, and, when Hannah said she was tired, offered to finish packing her box, and to do sundry little jobs of needlework which of course had been left to the last moment.

Very early the next morning, Hannah was breakfasting by the light of a solitary candle. Frau Mühlbach, in dressing-gown and slippers, was cutting "*Bütterbröder*" for her sustenance during the journey. "Such a long one, and so cold!" she said; "tell me, *liebe* Miss, are you well wrapped up? you and your countrywomen are so imprudent. Adieu, then, and write to me on your arrival, and before all things do not lose your ticket!"

No! Hannah would put the ticket in her purse, and she had a very safe pocket. This reminded her of the evening she had arrived at Augusta Strasse without her purse. How many things had happened since then! The pleasant days at the seaside, the party at Friedrichs Wald, the Frau Doctorin's many kindnesses—all seemed like a dream. "I am growing very stupid," said Hannah to herself, "to be perpetually looking back in this manner."

It was not far to the railway. Hannah and the Fräulein (who had insisted upon seeing her off) arrived in good time. There were a few passengers bundled up in furs and strange outer garments. The

men were smoking, and the women were asleep. The waiting-room was exceedingly stuffy (there had been no waste of the good hot air, through opening windows, for many a long day), but it was warm in consequence.

The two girls sat down on a red velvet sofa and waited. The hand of the clock wanted ten minutes to eight when the guard flung open the doors, shouting, "All passengers take their places." Then there was a rush and a stamping of feet, and screaming of tired children.

Hannah waited at the carriage-door. There was just a chance that Jim might come still; she hoped he would. The thought of their unsatisfactory meeting made her miserable; he was changed of course, and hadn't cared to speak to her at Friedrichs Wald, but that was no reason why she should resent his conduct and behave like a foolish child.

The guard came up and suggested that the Fräulein had better take her seat.

"I will wait and see you off," said her companion. Hannah kissed her and begged that she would not stand about in the cold.

"*Ach, was!* Here is a gentleman who will miss his train."

It was Jim Penwarden, running along the platform.

"I hoped I should catch you! Are you in a comfortable carriage? I will speak to the guard.

I ought to have been here in time to take your ticket; have you got it all right?"

"Yes, it's all right," answered Hannah cheerfully; "only please ask the guard to tell me when I'm to change my carriage."

"To be sure," said Jim, flying off to give the guard a handsome "*Trinkgeld*," and to explain that the lady was a foreigner, and must be specially looked after.

"We weren't very lively last night," said Hannah, bent upon being natural and at her ease; "I wanted to ask you a great many questions, but there was no time."

"Did you?" asked Jim, with a beaming countenance. "You know, don't you, that there is nothing in the world I would not do for you if I could. For old sake's sake, Hannah!"

He had got her hand in his now. The bell rang.

"If there's anything you want done, anything, let me know at once (Jim had forgotten all about Dr. Burton). Promise me, Hannah!"

"Yes, I do promise. Good-bye."

"God bless you! Good-bye."

One wave of his hat, a smile from Hannah, and the train steamed out of the station.

"*Sind liebenswürdige Menschen diese Engländer*," observed the Fräulein, on her return to Frau Mühlbach; "*bleiben doch immer eigenthümlich!*"

It was quite dark by the time Hannah arrived

at her destination. She was the only passenger to alight at Kleinstadt; the station-master greeted her with the pleasing piece of information that Herr Linden's coachman had been waiting for the last hour. The train was late—all the trains were late; it appeared not impossible that the line would be blocked to-morrow. It was as well that Fräulein had arrived without further inconvenience. Would she kindly step into the waiting-room? It was warm there, and the coachman should come for orders.

"*Guten Abend, gnädiges Fräuleinchen,*" said a gruff voice. It was Fritz who stood on the threshold, wrapped from head to foot in an enormous coat, his long beard white with snow, like a full-grown Father Christmas, and his blue eyes glittering with curiosity. It was not every day that he could see a lady from England.

"*Guten Abend,*" responded Hannah, looking at him, in her turn, with great interest.

"If it is pleasing to the Fräuleinchen, I will order her coffee, and we will start at once. It grows late."

"Very well," said Hannah; "do you come from Robewitz?"

"*Ja, ja,*" said Fritz, with a smile, "*'s ist gut* that the gracious young lady speaks German. *Es ist gut! Gnädiges Fräuleinchen* has commanded that the Fräulein shall drink some coffee."

"Is that Fräulein Linden?"

"Nay, nay. It is Fräulein Cécile."

"What a pretty name!" thought Hannah; "Cécile Linden; that must be the niece."

Fritz had disappeared, to return shortly with a tray and a cup of steaming coffee.

"It is the wife of the station-master who has supplied this at my request," observed Fritz; "I will bring the sledge immediately." By and by the station-master came to look after Hannah, making an elaborate apology for his wife, who had hurt her foot, and could not consequently visit the Fräulein herself. When Fritz returned to say that the horses were at the door, Hannah was thoroughly warm, and ready to brave the perils of the journey.

"One moment, *wenn's gefällig ist. Gnädiges Fräuleinchen* has sent her fur mantle. Fräulein must put it on." Fritz held out an enormous overcoat before Hannah's astonished eyes.

"But I have a thick *Regen-mantel* of my own," she said, pointing to her ulster. At this the station-master smiled, and Fritz said that that little coat might be of some service in the summer, but now, *Gott bewahre!* the Fräulein would be frozen.

It was no use making any further resistance: Fritz held up the fur coat, and Hannah put it on. "The collar pulls up," he explained, "if the wind becomes too bitter."

The station-master came to the door, and some one upstairs pulled the curtain aside, and let a flood of light fall on the snowy ground. It was his wife, anxious to view the departure of the stranger.

It was nearly eight o'clock, as the horses, at a word from Fritz, bounded along the frozen road. The little town of Kleinstadt appeared to be fast asleep; the lamps twinkled dimly in the market-place, but the shops were shut, and there were no signs of life except at a tall house with a row of stiff poplars in front, which, as Fritz explained, was the principal inn.

On they went, through a long street, past a dark church, out into the country beyond. Here were no more lamps, no sledges, and apparently no living creatures; only the wild waste of snow and the cutting wind.

For the first time it occurred to Hannah to ask how far they were still from Robewitz.

"That depends, Fräuleinchen, on the roads. If the snow holds up, two hours will take us there."

Fritz was indulging in a little run by the side of the sledge; Hannah's eyes were gradually getting accustomed to the darkness, and she was able to distinguish the trees one from another; they formed a stiff avenue along the side of the Chaussée. Fritz was disposed to be communicative, but Hannah was too tired to ask many questions, and too cold to care much where the different roads led to that he

pointed out with such interest. Once he mentioned a name that sounded strangely familiar. They had reached a very lonely part of the road, where a narrow way branched off to the right, through a dark wood.

"Does Fräuleinchen see?" asked Fritz, as he checked the horses; "the snow lies deep. That is the road to Felsensee."

"Is that a village?"

"Yes, Fräuleinchen, and a *Schloss*—a wonderfully beautiful castle, though the *gnädige Frau* is a widow and receives little company; formerly——purr—r—r—" shouted Fritz. One of the horses had put his foot into a hole, and was plunging in the deep snow. The sledge began to turn slowly on one side, but Fritz succeeded in propping it up with his shoulder (assuring Hannah that there was no occasion for alarm), while he coaxed and scolded the frightened horse into regaining his footing on the firm ground.

It seemed many hours to Hannah before they finally halted at the door of a long low house, all silent and shut up: not a soul was visible, and the only indication of there being an inhabitant was a streak of light from the hall window.

"I will soon make them hear!" observed Fritz, cracking his whip till the courtyard resounded with the echo. The door opened slowly. A tall man came out into the verandah.

"Good-evening! We had almost given you up. Welcome to Robewitz, my dear Fräulein! Allow me to assist you."

Hannah wanted a great deal of assistance; she hardly knew how she got out of the sledge and into the warm, light hall. A door at the farther end banged, and a girl came running towards her. She had pink cheeks and sparkling black eyes; she held out her hands: "*Wie geht's?* How delightful that you have come! Let me help you unfasten your things. Papa! she is nearly frozen!"

Hannah had been preparing a set speech to make on her arrival, but not one word of it could she remember—she was dazzled and bewildered with the sudden heat and light. "You are very good," was all she said, as a servant advanced to unclasp the fur mantle that had been of such service to her, and Cécile dragged at her gloves, chattering all the time.

"Now, you are quite ready to come and make the acquaintance of Aunt Elisabeth; that is the Miss Linden to whom you wrote; but first, will you let me kiss you?"

In her graceful foreign fashion, Cécile kissed Hannah on either cheek, and led her into the drawing-room, to be received by Tante Elisabeth with frigid courtesy.

Cécile was supremely happy; she felt that her pet plan was going to be a success. The *Eng-*

länderin, though she was shy and silent, was a thousand times more delightful than she had dared to hope. Papa was rubbing his hands, and making all the pretty speeches he could think of; even Tante Elisabeth was gradually thawing under the influence of Miss Tarne's broken German and lovely gray eyes; and as for Cécile herself, she felt that she had found a sister at last.

When the new arrival had been shown to her room, and had duly admired the tasteful arrangements that had been prepared for her reception, Cécile slipped downstairs again to express her delight.

"Is she not charming, Tante, and so pretty!"

"We must not decide too soon; hasty friendships are the soonest broken, Cécile."

"That is very unkind," said Cécile, shrugging her shoulders. "I know that I shall love her, and our friendship will not be broken."

"Time will show," observed Aunt Elisabeth, and her niece ran away to find a more sympathising spirit in her kind old father. Indeed, the spoilt girl had made up her mind that Tante Elisabeth's gloomy prognostications should not be realised; she would do her very best to make Miss Tarne's visit a happy one, and all the more so as she knew in her heart of hearts that it might not be of very long duration. In spite of all she had said to tease Tante Elisabeth, Cécile had grown up with the idea that she should

one day marry Otto von Felsensee. For the last year or so she had seen very little of him, but this Christmas she had spent a week with her godmother at Felsensee, and Otto had been handsomer and much more attentive than ever; so considerate and affectionate to his mother, and so devoted to his old playfellow that Cécile's heart was nearly won. That her father would approve she knew; her godmother loved her already as a daughter; Tante Elisabeth looked upon the affair as settled. There were absolutely no obstacles in the way of her happiness; it was marked out clear enough. Otto would be in the neighbourhood again in the spring; then everything would be finally settled. Papachen would give a great party in honour of the *Verlobung;* in the winter she would coax him into taking a house at Berlin; and here Cécile's imagination wandered off into visions of endless dances and balls, when she would be the admired of all beholders, with Otto always in attendance as devoted cavalier, and ready to fulfil her slightest wish. It was a romantic and impossible dream this of silly Cécile's, but she believed in it nevertheless, and was supremely gracious and just a little self-important in consequence.

In the meantime, Hannah considered herself to be most fortunate in having fallen amongst such friendly people; she never felt thoroughly at home here as she had done at Bernsdorf, but she scolded herself for being ungrateful, and fancied that when

she got more accustomed to the lonely country life, she should leave off finding the days so long, and looking forward to the arrival of the letters as the great event of her life.

The Linden household kept very early and regular hours—breakfast at eight o'clock, dinner at half-past twelve, early coffee, and supper at eight. In the afternoon they often drove out; the roads were frozen hard and firm, and the sledging was a great pleasure to both the girls.

It was difficult to induce Cécile to have regular English lessons, or to read any sensible book; but she talked fluently, and liked Hannah to read aloud to her, or tell her stories about England, London especially. She had a great desire, she said, to visit this great city; it was only a pity that it was so out of the world.

One afternoon, when Hannah had been some weeks at Robewitz, she was sitting with Cécile in her own room. Some friends were expected to supper, and Fräulein Linden was busy arranging the table and scolding the servants. They could hear her voice now, giving orders in a loud, sharp key.

"*Ach!*" said Cécile, yawning and throwing down her book; "when I am married, I shall not trouble myself about the silver and the tablecloths; I shall leave that to other people. You will see what a comfortable household I shall have."

"I hope you will ask me to come and stay with

you then. I should like to visit the palace of perfection."

"Certainly I shall, dear Hannah, and introduce you to the Prince also, though perhaps I may be able to do that this spring."

"Suppose we don't like each other?" asked Hannah, who had already received several mysterious hints as to Cécile's future prospects.

"That will be very sad, and you would be hard to please. He is a universal favourite, and I cannot wonder at it; even Aunt Elisabeth says he is perfection. But then the officers have such delightful manners, and we see so few of them here. It just occurs to me that perhaps you met him when you were in Bernsdorf. You were there in the summer?"

"Yes," said Hannah, "but you haven't told me his name?"

"Otto von Felsensee. It is a great secret, and I only tell it to you."

"Of *course* I know him quite well," exclaimed Hannah, memories of pleasant days at Bernsdorf darting through her mind. "Cécile! I'm delighted to hear it; what an absurdly small world we live in, to be sure! I danced with Herr von Felsensee the day we met him at Friedrichs Wald; and afterwards he came to stay with us at the sea, and we were very much together."

"Did he ever talk to you of his home or about us?"

"Sometimes he talked about his mother, but never about you. I am sure Frau Doctorin Blumenlaube did not know that he was engaged to be married."

"And he is not engaged to be married, I tell you, Hannah," cried Cécile, jumping up from her seat; "nor am I, and perhaps we never shall be. You talk like Aunt Elisabeth. I told you it was a secret, and that nothing was decided, or would be till Easter."

"I'm very sorry, but I hope it *will* be decided, because I liked Herr von Felsensee so much—better than all the gentlemen I met at Bernsdorf."

"*So?*" This piece of information was not altogether pleasing to Cécile; she did not understand how it came about, if Otto and Hannah had seen so much of each other, that he had never mentioned the circumstance, when she had set her heart upon having an *Engländerin* to stay with her at Robewitz. The next time she went to visit her godmother she would make inquiries.

"It would be convenient, without doubt, to Papa," she said, with the slight haughtiness of manner that was so like Aunt Elisabeth, "to have me so close to him; and Felsensee is a pretty place, and not so dull as this; it is nearer to the railway and the train."

Hannah recollected that Fritz had pointed out to her a snowed-up road, which, he said, led to a *Schloss* of that name. If she had only known

when she last saw the Lieutenant that she was coming to the Lindens, he would perhaps have told her of his engagement to Cécile; now she remembered that he had been very mysterious about his journey to Pomerania. Then the telegram had arrived from Jim, and put everything else out of her head.

"You quite understand that I tell you this in confidence," said Cécile, after a minute's silence; "I should immensely dislike it talked of in Bernsdorf."

"I will not mention it to a single soul till you give me leave; only do let me tell you how very glad I am. I ought to have congratulated you at first, but I was so astonished. It was *such* a pity that we never talked about you together."

A shade passed over Cécile's pretty face; she was not accustomed to trouble her herself to conceal her feelings.

"Now you are vexed with me," said Hannah. "Never mind; I won't say another word on the subject till you tell me I may."

"You are a sweet little creature, and I believe you are good to me." Cécile turned round and looked Hannah full in the face (for the first time since the conversation had turned on Otto von Felsensee), then seized her hand and kissed it. She was thoroughly ashamed, for the time being, of her own jealousy.

One morning at breakfast Herr Linden announced

that he had received an important business letter, and that he must start at once for Q——, where he might be detained some days. Cécile was much vexed, and came grumbling to Hannah. She hated business; she did not see why Papa need go flying off all those miles to see a person who might just as well wait till next week; it was dull enough at Robewitz—when it nearly always snowed, and Tante Elisabeth was as disagreeable as she could be—without Papa leaving to make things worse. Besides (and this was the real grievance), she had set her heart upon going into town to-day to see a school-friend, who was there on a visit. They could not all go, and she did not like to propose leaving Hannah alone with Tante Elisabeth. Whereupon, Hannah naturally declared that she should not mind staying at home; there would be another opportunity for her to go to Kleinstadt; finally, she begged that Cécile would go with her father.

This was exactly what Cécile wished; she suddenly cheered up; Tante Elisabeth could not reproach her *now* for incivility and selfishness; Hannah had herself proposed the plan. Cécile determined to bring her back a very pretty present from Kleinstadt; what a comfort it was, to have to do with such an amiable girl as her dear *Engländerin!*

"Help me to get ready, dear Hannah," she cried;

"Papachen cannot wait; he must catch the train. I shall get a long day in town, and remain there till dusk. There comes the sunshine; we shall have a delightful drive."

Cécile came down at last, looking so pretty in her scarlet hood, and chattering so merrily to Aunt Elisabeth, who, she said, was to take the greatest care of Hannah, that Herr Linden was fain to forget that she had kept him waiting for a quarter of an hour, and looked with admiration and delight at his darling.

The old school-friend welcomed Cécile with rapture, and entreated her to remain in town all day; but no, Cécile explained that she had ordered the coachman to fetch her in time to drive to Felsensee on her way home; she was afraid her visit must be a short one.

"Ah!" laughed Marie, a pretty empty-headed girl, a year or so older than Cécile; "I must not venture to detain you, if you are on your way to Felsensee. How is the handsome Lieutenant, *Kindchen?* Is he also at the castle?"

"*Wie meinst Du?*" asked Cécile, blushing crimson.

"Was he not formerly an admirer of thine?" asked Marie, who had not a notion how things stood between her friend and Otto von Felsensee; "I have lately made the acquaintance of a charming girl, Adèle Blumenlaube, who comes from Bernsdorf, and raves about this handsome Lieutenant."

"Is he much liked?" inquired Cécile, as carelessly as she could.

"*Gewiss!* but he has no particular flame, so says Adèle; he dances with all the young ladies in turn, and is universally admired. Last summer, however, he was deeply interested in a beautiful English girl, who has since left Bernsdorf. There was an accident, and he saved her life somehow. Adèle told me what she was called, but I cannot remember these foreign names; it gives me too much trouble. But perhaps you have heard of her from Frau von Felsensee? I wonder how she will like an English daughter-in-law?"

Marie chattered on, and Cécile listened, and asked as many questions as she dared, without exciting her friend's curiosity; as she listened, although she knew that Marie exaggerated and contradicted herself at every turn, she hardened her heart against Hannah. How she had been deceived! she would never trust any one again! And Hannah, too, who had pretended to be so much interested in all she had been told about Otto von Felsensee! She must have been laughing at her all the time, as a neglected country girl, who had waited patiently for months, while her lover amused himself, and flirted with some one else. It was shameful! Cécile longed to rush home at once and accuse Hannah of her treachery; but that was impossible, so she swallowed her indignation

as best she could, and tried to prevent Marie from discovering that anything was the matter. Then she remembered how charming she had thought Otto this Christmas; perhaps the whole story was untrue from beginning to end. And Hannah? Cécile's heart smote her as she remembered Tante Elisabeth's warning, and her own resolution to be friendly and kind to her young companion. Well, she would certainly drive to Felsensee, if only to see if her godmother received her the same as usual. However, when Fritz arrived after dinner, it required some persuasion on the part of his young mistress to induce him to take this extra journey.

"It is much out of the way, *gnädiges Fräuleinchen,*" he remonstrated; "*gnädiger Herr* would object, but (Fritz had been twenty years in the family, and Cécile's wish was law) if *gnädiges Fräuleinchen* will not remain too long at the *Schloss,* I will do as she orders."

"How long will it be safe to stay, Fritz?" asked Cécile; she had said good-bye to Marie, and they had left Kleinstadt a mile or so behind them.

"One cannot say exactly to a moment. *Ein halbes Stündchen* might be long enough, and then Frauleinchen reaches home without delay from the thaw or the darkness."

Frau von Felsensee was much surprised and gratified to receive Cécile's visit. "Now that you have come I shall keep you, dear child," she said. But

Cécile could not stay; she had just come to have a little talk with her dear godmamma, and to beg for a cup of coffee.

"That you shall have at once," said the old lady, as she rang the bell. Everything in the *Schloss* looked exactly the same as usual. Frau von Felsensee—a stately handsome, old lady, with snow-white hair that she wore brushed off her face, under a most becoming cap—was certainly unchanged. She talked openly of her son, and said that she hoped he would be able to come at Easter without fail; then she showed Cécile a splendid album that he had sent her from Berlin. Cécile began to feel much happier; she admired the album, and asked who was to be put into the first page, which was illuminated.

"*Otto, natürlich,*" said Frau von Felsensee, patting Cécile's shoulder; "but I am waiting till he sends me a new one. I am not satisfied with those I have. You will find a pile of them over there on his writing-table, that remains always as he leaves it. Amuse yourself with the photographs while I make the coffee."

Cécile offered to make the coffee, but the old lady would not hear of it; her dear child had a journey before her; she looked already pale, she must rest.

So Cécile went to the table and looked over the photographs of the Lieutenant, none of which came up to his mother's ideal.

"This is a good likeness of you, dear godmamma," exclaimed Cécile.

"Yes, and the velvet frame is handsome, *nicht wahr?* It opens too, but the spring is stiff. I tell Otto it is too grand a frame for his old mother: he should reserve it for the portrait of a young lady."

Cécile did not answer; she was admiring the ingenious way in which the case unfolded; she had found the spring easily enough. Inside was a photograph of the Emperor and one of the Empress; these she had often seen before. In the last division of the case was another photograph, of a girl—a pretty girl with great sad eyes, and a lace scarf round her neck; in the corner was written "H. T., May 2." Cécile did not need the initials to tell her who the girl was. Marie was right, then, after all. Had not Hannah herself declared that she had often met Otto? Very intimate they must have been to exchange photographs; yes! and probably he had suggested her coming to Robewitz on purpose to make a mock of his old friend's daughter. The room seemed to turn round with Cécile; she caught hold of the table, and made a great effort not to cry out.

Frau von Felsensee was still busy with her *Kaffeemaschine.* "I am rejoiced to hear, *liebes Kind,* that you are so happy with the English Miss. Your father tells me that she is bright and amiable. It is good for you to have a companion. You

must bring her to see me when the weather changes. Is she young?"

"Yes, and very pretty. Hannah Tarne her name is. She is clever also," added Cécile bitterly.

"*So?* Greet Fräulein Hannah Tarne from me, and say I hope to have the pleasure of making her acquaintance. Any friend of my beloved Cécile is welcome at Felsensee. Come now, and tell me what you think of our cake. You look fatigued; the driving in the cold is too much for you. Remain here, and we will send a message to Fräulein Linden."

But no; Cécile declared that she was not tired and not ill; she must go home, she had promised, and it was still early. As she spoke the servant came in to say that the sledge was ready. Before she left, Cécile put her arms round the old lady's neck and kissed her affectionately; one friend is true to me still, she thought.

It grew darker and darker. The road which led from Felsensee across the country to the Chaussée was blocked up with snow. For all Fritz's care, his shouting to the horses, his hanging on to the sledge, and his running by the side to ease it of his weight, they made but slow progress. A kind of sleet and snow began to fall, lightly but steadily; it prevented Fritz from seeing his way as clearly as he would have liked. However, he forbore to alarm Fräulein Cécile, or to reproach her for having insisted upon the extra journey. She seemed to desire silence

also; perhaps she was sorry that she had refused his good advice. She sat back in her seat with a huge wrap over her head, and never spoke or moved, except when a deeper hole or a larger stone than usual, threatened to upset the sledge. It was a joyful moment to Fritz when, through the mist and darkness, he recognised a low building with a tall tree in front of it; it was the toll-gate, and they had reached the Chaussée. "Heaven be praised!" muttered Fritz; "we are on firm ground at last." The horses pricked up their ears, jingled their bells, and set off at a good sharp trot.

"Fritz!" exclaimed Cécile, speaking for the first time.

"*Gnädiges Fräuleinchen?*"

"There is some one calling to us. Do you not hear?"

"*Ja, ja;* Fräuleinchen is right."

Through the darkness came a muffled shout. Fritz put his hands to his mouth and shouted in return. A dark object loomed in the distance; it was a sledge, and the coachman was leading his horses through the snow.

"*Guten Abend.* The Herr is in a hurry; we have met with an accident, and a strap has given way. Have you a piece of rope?"

Of course Fritz had; he bade the man draw close up to him; one of the horses was shy and would not stand.

"Let it be," said another voice; "I will go to his head."

A tall man got out of the sledge, and made his way to the two coachmen; he carried a lantern, and as a streak of light fell on the group before him, he exclaimed, "I am certainly most fortunate. Good evening, Cécile. I had no idea that it was your sledge that we have been following. This is a pleasure; but are you out alone?"

Cécile was so taken by surprise that, for the moment, she forgot her resolution never to speak to Otto again, or think of him even (though she had done little else since the morning). She held out her hand, which Otto raised to his lips. "I have been to see your mother; she does not know that you are in this neighbourhood."

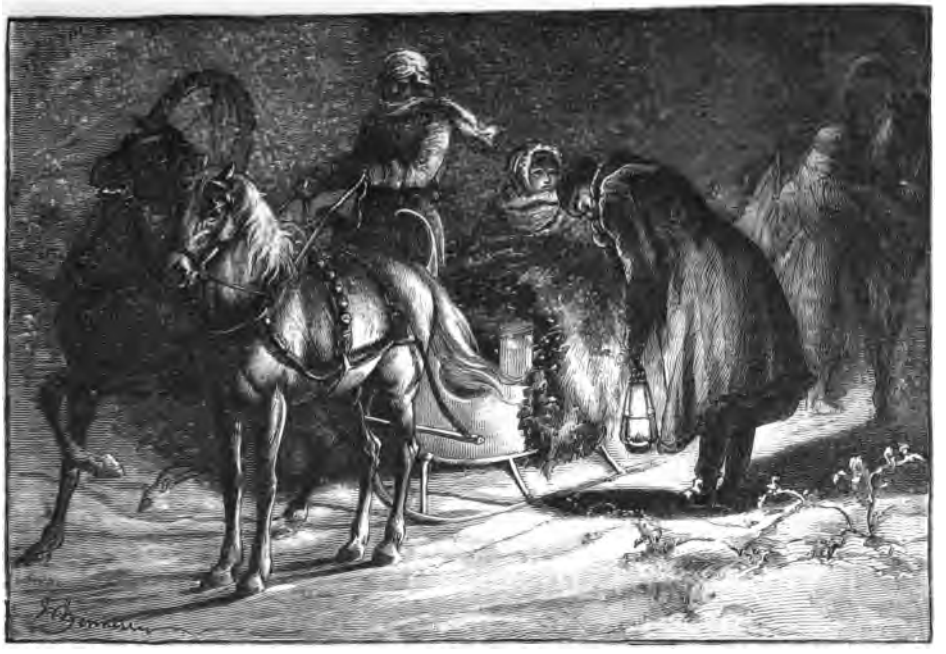
"I hardly know it myself," said Otto, laughing; "I thought to take you by surprise at Robewitz. I bring good news, and I came from Berlin at least as fast as a letter. Now, Fritz, do you want my help there. *Geht's gut?*"

"*Ja, ja, gnädiger Herr,* it will hold. *Schön willkommen.*"

Otto touched his cap in acknowledgment of Fritz's greeting, and turned again to Cécile.

"What is your good news?" she asked, striving to be dignified and indifferent.

"I have obtained my promotion, my honoured Fräulein, much sooner than I expected, and I come



"She held out her hand, which Otto raised to his lips."—P. 236.

to communicate the tidings to your father and to *you.*"

"I congratulate you heartily!"

It was almost impossible to remain indifferent under the personal influence of Otto's kindly nature, but Cécile forced herself into it; let him first explain his flirtation with Hannah; she would bring them face to face, these two disloyal friends, and see what they had to say then! "You will not find Papa at home; he went away this morning."

"A thousand pities! But Tante Elisabeth will receive me, will she not? Are you two ladies alone?"

"No, the *Engländerin* is there also. I told you I should like to have a companion; she has been with us for some weeks."

"I shall be able to practise my English then; it is not so bad, I had occasion to speak a good deal last year."

Without doubt he had! Cécile muffled herself in her shawl, and said not another word. The broken strap was mended now, and the coachman was only waiting for the Herr Lieutenant. Cécile would not invite him into her sledge.

"Shall we take the lead, *gnädiges Fräuleinchen?*" asked Fritz.

She nodded. They were soon flying towards Robewitz at such a quick trot, that the hired horses of the Lieutenant were totally unable to keep up the pace, and were left far behind.

CHAPTER VI.

LIKE a whirlwind Cécile burst in upon Tante Elisabeth and Hannah, who were quietly sitting over their sewing in the drawing-room.

"What is the matter?" asked Fräulein Linden, fairly startled into anxiety.

"I have met Otto von Felsensee on the road; he will soon be here."

"Is any one ill?"

"Ill? No!" exclaimed Cécile, flinging off her red hood, and giving vent to the torrent of passion that she had been cherishing all day; "but I have been deceived; cruelly deceived," she repeated, turning round on Hannah; "you told me truly that you had met Otto von Felsensee, but you only told me half of the story. What is this that I hear? He has been paying court to you all the summer, and then comes here to amuse himself with a little country girl like me! I know all about it, and you know also how you talked me over and combined together to make a fool of me, you two!"

Cécile's face was crimson with anger; she fairly

stamped her foot on the floor as she poured forth her accusations and reproaches. Hannah listened in the uttermost bewilderment; for the first few minutes she had nothing to say; it was Aunt Elisabeth who answered Cécile's wild speech.

"This is a mistake altogether, Cécile; who has put such an idea into your head? Fräulein Hannah, in all probability, knows nothing of Herr Otto or your engagement. Sit down, my dear niece, and let us talk it over quietly."

"She knows him quite well. He saved her from drowning (Cécile had read romances by the score, and was it not a circumstance of common occurrence that the hero should fall in love with the lady he had rescued from a lingering death?); she gave him her photograph; I have had it in my hands today!"

"The photograph!" repeated Hannah; "yes, I gave my photograph to Herr von Felsensee the day he brought back my purse; he was so kind about it. Fräulein Schwarz told me I should not have given it to him, but I did not see any harm. Is that what you mean, Cécile?"

"Why did you not tell me before? I will never speak to you again!"

"I had forgotten all about it, Cécile." Hannah came across the room and tried to take her hand. "Won't you believe me? You know this story is not true. If you don't trust *me*, at least you will

believe what the Lieutenant says. We never talked about you; I never heard him mention your name. And as for anything else, it is perfectly ridiculous and utterly untrue. Fräulein Linden, tell her it is not true!"

"Cécile, do you not perceive how unjust you are?"

No, Cécile would not listen to Tante Elisabeth; she would not listen to Hannah; she had worked herself up to such a pitch of wrath and excitement that perhaps it would have been a positive disappointment to her to have to acknowledge that nobody was in the wrong except herself.

"What a reception is this you are preparing for Otto? Think only! I hear him coming!"

"I will not receive him at all," cried Cécile, flinging herself into an arm-chair, and holding her hands up to her burning face.

"Then I must," said Aunt Elisabeth, going to the door. "No, go you, Fräulein Hannah, instead. Say that Cécile is not quite well; that she will see him presently."

"Do not send *her*," cried Cécile, but it was too late; through the half-open door she could see Otto; he had not waited to take off his fur coat; he was shaking the snow off it as he stood in the hall. For a second her heart relented; Tante Elisabeth was right; what a meeting! And he had come so many miles to see her! how happy he looked, and how

handsome! Why had all this mystery come between them? why indeed, Cécile?

Otto came into the outer drawing-room; Hannah advanced to meet him. Cécile saw him start, and heard his exclamation, "Fräulein Hannah! How have you come here? I am rejoiced, but astonished to meet you. Cécile did not tell me."

"Herr von Felsensee, will you do me a great favour?"

"But with pleasure, *mein Fräulein;* it is hardly necessary to ask. Good evening, *liebe Tante,* I come to pay you a very short visit; only an hour and I must return. Is Cécile ill, do you say? what is the matter?"

Otto was quick enough of comprehension; Aunt Elisabeth's muttered words of explanation were quite enough to tell him that something was very wrong. Cécile, crouched in the arm-chair, had hidden her face, like the spoilt child she really was; Fräulein Linden looked more distressed and embarrassed than he had ever seen her before, and as for Hannah (whom he had left happy and rejoicing over her English telegram), she was standing, pale as a ghost, with clasped hands. It *was* Hannah, though she was much changed, and he could not conceive why he had not heard of her coming to Robewitz before.

"There has been a slight misunderstanding between the young ladies," began Fräulein Linden hesitatingly; "something about a photograph of

Fräulein Hannah. You will be able to explain everything. I would my brother were at home!"

So did Otto, especially now that he began to have a glimmering of the true state of affairs. He wished he had remained in Berlin; he wished that Cécile's *Engländerin* had been any other girl in the wide world than Fräulein Hannah Tarne; much as he had admired her in days gone by, that was a thing of the past (so he told himself); he was sincerely attached to Cécile, and more hurt by her reception of him than he had supposed possible; at the same time it was not altogether disagreeable to him that she condescended to be jealous.

Hannah was the first to break the silence.

"Herr von Felsensee, will you tell Fräulein Linden that there has been a mistake?"

"Certainly, my Fräulein, if I know what it is."

"Some one has invented a story about you and me and Cécile."

Hannah left off wringing her hands, and looked straight up into the Lieutenant's blue eyes. "Please say that you never proposed to me, or (it was such an absurd question that she smiled in spite of her distress) thought of such a thing!"

This was no time for explanations and apologies, as Otto felt.

"Fräulein Hannah," he said very gravely, "I must answer your question with another. Had the subject been mentioned between us, which, as you

say, is a pure fabrication, your reception of my proposal would hardly have been flattering to my self-esteem, would it?"

"No, of course not!"

It was not complimentary, but Otto was inwardly grateful to her for her simplicity; it was just that straightforwardness that had fascinated him in the days when he had taken her for one of Fräulein Schwarz's pupils. "You, Tante Elisabeth, will believe me when I say that some person has given himself much unnecessary trouble to spread reports that are without foundation."

"Tales and scandals! I am rejoiced that we need talk no more of them," said Fräulein Linden, who was extremely anxious that Otto should not hear the whole of her niece's exaggerated accusations. "*Komm*, Cécile, what have you to say? Give Fräulein Hannah thy hand. And here is Otto just arrived from a long journey; you must entertain him while I order some refreshment."

Cécile remained motionless and silent; Hannah, after some hesitation, left the room, and Fräulein Linden followed her example with an apologetic murmur; she supposed it would be as well to give these foolish young people an opportunity of coming to an understanding. Then she was a little uneasy about the supper; the cook had not been told that company was expected, and the Lieutenant must at least have a good "*Braten*."

"Cécile," said Otto, as he stood by her chair, speaking in a low voice—he was surprised at himself for being so affected—"I came on quite another errand. I do not know who has poisoned your mind against me, or to what purpose. I will say nothing of myself, but you must know that Fräulein Hannah is incapable of a mean thought towards you, or indeed any one. That I admired her is true, but there the story ends (here Otto felt a slight qualm of conscience, but *was willst Du?* All is fair in love and war). Cécile! if there is anything to forgive, will you forgive me?"

Still no answer.

"Cécile," he said, at his wits' end, "I must leave you; my time is up. Will you not give me your hand as a token that I may come and speak to you—plead my cause better—another time?"

She gave no sign of having heard him, except that she pressed her face closer against the cushion. Her hand was hanging down listlessly—such a pretty little hand! she wore a tiny coral ring, which he recognised—it must have been a present from his mother.

"Otto," said Fräulein Linden, looking in at the door, "your coachman says he can wait no longer, it is such a bad night. Let me persuade you to remain here till the morning."

"No, no; it is quite impossible. Many heartfelt thanks, but the man is right. I must return."

"You will at least wait for some refreshment—a glass of wine—my brother will be distressed."

"You are too good, Tante Elisabeth, I cannot remain. *Auf, wiedersehen! Adieu, meine Damen.*"

They heard his voice in the hall, and Fritz expostulating on the severity of the weather—a shouting of the men outside, and the hall-door was shut with a crash.

Then, and not till then, Cécile got up from her chair; she burst into a passion of sobs.

"What have I done?" she cried, flinging her arms over her head in despair. "You were right, Tante Elisabeth, and I have a wicked, bad temper. I have insulted my best friend, and she will never love me again. And Otto? I have sent him away; *er ist gut und brav;* he will hate me also. Otto, come back and forgive me; oh! come back, come back!"

As Hannah crept upstairs to her room, one of the servants put a letter into her hand. It was quite dark; she felt her way to a chair, and sat down to think over what she had just seen and heard. The storm was coming up fast, and a great tree that stood close to the house shook its boughs against the casement and moaned in the wind. Hannah clasped her hands tight together (forgetful of the letter) and tried to decide what she must do next. It had been an utter failure then, this companionship of hers; it was clear that Cécile neither trusted her nor believed her word. Hannah's heart

sank within her, as she recalled the cruel things that Cécile had said in her rage—all the false accusations. "After all," she thought, with the unsparing criticism of her nineteen years, "if it had been true—some of it—I don't see what I have done to be reproached for; it was only the other day that Cécile told me that she was *not* engaged to Otto von Felsensee, and perhaps she never would be. He is a gentleman, at any rate; how could she think so badly of him as to imagine that he wanted to be engaged to two people at once? She must be very devoted to him, that's very clear; poor Cécile, poor little thing! perhaps I'm being very hard on her too."

Hannah felt utterly miserable; she leant her head against the wall, and listened to the raging storm. By and by she heard a noise in the hall. "Can that be the Lieutenant," she wondered; "*surely* she can't have sent him away! And if it is my fault, I must leave here directly; even if they wished it, I could never be happy here again."

All sorts of wild ideas flew through her brain; she would bribe one of the servants to take her to Kleinstadt to-night; no, perhaps not to-night—it was too late—but to-morrow morning early, before Cécile was up. Then she would go back to Berlin; Frau Mühlbach would find room for her till she could arrange what to do next. She might go to Bernsdorf; but no! the Frau Doctorin would ask all sorts of questions, and the whole story would come

out about the Lieutenant, and Cécile's jealousy. Her cheeks grew flaming hot at the bare suggestion. Underneath all this planning and scheming ran another current of thought; she believed that Jim Penwarden had returned to Berlin, and had she not promised to write and tell him if she wanted any help? "I did promise," she exclaimed out loud, "and I will keep my word." She didn't know clearly what Jim was to do for her—help her perhaps to find another home, miles and miles away from Robewitz and the Lindens; anyhow she could leave it all to him. As she came to this conclusion the sense of loneliness passed away; she remembered her letter; it was the first time since she had been in Germany that a letter had remained unopened so long. Then she must pack her travelling-bag, and put her clothes together; she supposed they could be sent on to her.

Hannah lighted a candle and looked at her letter; it was English of course, but she did not know the handwriting. She opened it wonderingly; it was written in pencil, just a few lines in weak undecided characters.

"My dear Child—I am afraid this letter will cause you some grief, but I think it right to let you know that I have met with an accident. The doctors are hopeful about me to-day, but, at my age. I know that the chances of recovery are against me,

God's will be done! I wish to see you again; if it should not be inconvenient, I hope you will endeavour to return to London as soon as may be. I consider it advisable to let you know that I have business matters of importance to communicate to you, and I should prefer doing so by word of mouth. I have spoken to Mrs. Walter Tarne, and she will probably write to beg you to hasten your journey. Your affectionate friend, EDWARD BURTON."

"What shall I do?" cried Hannah, as she read the few lines over and over again, trying to find a shred of comfort where there was none. "Why didn't Ada write before? How shall I get there in time?" She rushed to the door; she must find some one who would help her to get away as quickly as possible—now, *at once.* As she flung it open, she stumbled against Fräulein Linden; she seized her hand eagerly (strange to say, she had forgotten the very existence of Tante Elisabeth in her excitement). "I must go to Kleinstadt directly. Do not keep me."

"My dear Miss:" said Tante Elisabeth in her usual deliberate manner, "I regret exceedingly that this occurrence should have taken place. I come to apologise to you in my own name and that of my brother. I have knocked several times, and could obtain no hearing; but I beg you not to take the affair so to heart."

"I—I had forgotten all about it," stammered Hannah through her tears; "you are very good. An old friend is dangerously ill, and I must go home—go to London at once."

"Dear Miss, this is very sad," said Fräulein Linden, taking Hannah's hand; "let us sit down and talk it over."

Hannah was grateful for a little kindness, and only too glad to hear that Fräulein Linden had come to suggest that, as it might not be pleasant for her to remain at Robewitz just at the present moment, would it not be better for her to go to Kleinstadt for a few days, and visit a cousin of Fräulein Linden's ("a very amiable person, I can assure you, and one who will rejoice to receive you," put in Tante Elisabeth). At the end of that time Herr Linden would have returned; Cécile would have recovered, and there would be nothing to disturb the so happy family circle again. Fräulein Linden never mentioned Otto von Felsensee; she had come hoping to arrange matters for the present; she did not believe that it would be possible for Cécile (in spite of her present fit of penitence) to meet Hannah on the following morning as if nothing had happened. She had expected to find Hannah indignant and angry; it would only be natural; for Fräulein Linden prided herself upon her well-balanced mind, and had a horror of injustice; besides, she had a vivid recollection of an interview

with Cécile's *Französinn*, who had raged and stormed upon the occasion, and had finally cried herself into violent hysterics, in consequence of the treatment she had received from her pupil. It was an agreeable surprise to Fräulein Linden to find Hannah in a comparatively tranquil mood; she uttered no reproaches, and was willing to receive advice. "A remarkable people these English, with so much force of self-repression," said Tante Elisabeth mentally; but outwardly she softened very much in manner, and did not leave Hannah till she had promised that Fritz should drive her to the station tomorrow morning, to meet the early train to Berlin.

"And now, my dear miss, good-night; you will need repose. I shall not tell Cécile of your departure; I hope that your absence may not be of long duration. Sleep well!"

And Hannah did sleep well: she was tired out after this eventful evening; the great tree continued to rock its boughs in the wind, and the storm howled round the house, but she heard nothing of either wind or storm.

As Hannah came downstairs the next morning, she stopped for a moment at the landing window and looked out at the beautiful scene that lay before her. Yesterday's tempest had blown over, and the rays of sunlight were creeping over the tops of the trees, and sparkling on the snow-covered shrubs. As yet there was no perceptible sign that the thaw

had set in; the lawn was one bare expanse of snow, and the gardener was hard at work already, sweeping the paths in case the ladies might wish to walk after breakfast. Beyond the lawn the ground sloped suddenly down towards a lake which was bordered with huge pines (only partly covered with snow) towering up into the cloudless sky; the lake looked dark, set in the middle of the snow landscape, and very peaceful. There was not a creature moving except the gardener; often and often had Hannah looked out of the landing window, and admired the wooded valley and the lake, but this morning the quiet and the sunshine brought the tears into her eyes; she knew that it was the last time she should see it, in spite of Fräulein Linden's protestations that her absence must be a short one. "I can never come back," she thought.

"Fräulein Hannah!" It was the servant. "Coffee is ready, and *gnädiges Fräulein* waits for you."

"Is Fräulein Cécile not down?"

"No, she has passed a bad night; she has headache and keeps her room."

"Will you say, if you please, that I am coming in a few minutes."

The girl went away, and Hannah walked quickly along the passage, and knocked at Cécile's door.

"*Herein!*"

The room was nearly dark; Hannah could just see a figure lying back in an arm-chair.

"Tante Elisabeth! Why did you not tell me that Hannah will leave us to-day? I mean to come down and see her again."

"I have come to say good-bye to you instead."

"Hannah! *Meine geliebte* Hannah!"

The last shadow of vexation, the last memory of Cécile's hard words, died away in Hannah's heart as she came up to the arm-chair, and caught sight of the white face, with the hair pushed back and dark rims under the eyes. Cécile looked years older.

"An old friend of mine is very ill," explained Hannah, in the same words she had used to Tante Elisabeth; "I could not go without wishing you good-bye."

"You go to London?"

"Yes, unless I hear to the contrary when I reach Berlin. Good-bye, dear Cécile; is your head very bad?"

"Yes, but that is nothing. Hannah, forgive me."

There was a shuffling in the passage.

"Fräulein," called the servant, "breakfast is on the table, and I am sent to pray you to make haste."

"I must say good-bye, Cécile. Don't think any more about it."

"I cannot help it; I am driving you away. It was because—because I love him so much. I did not know before."

"Fräulein, Fräulein!" sounded outside.

"It will all come right," whispered Hannah,

taking Cécile in her arms and kissing her; "and then you will wonder *how* you could have worried yourself about nothing."

"Children!" said another voice—it was Tante Elisabeth herself this time—"come, there is not a moment to lose."

"Good-bye, and I will write to you."

"*Adieu. Auf wiedersehen!*"

The train was already signalled when Hannah arrived at the little Kleinstadt station. There was only just time to bid a hasty farewell to Fritz. He, poor fellow, stood cap in hand, looking much distressed; he had not lived all these years in the Linden family, and driven their guests for nothing—he knew that something was radically wrong. Fräulein Hannah had received bad news from England—so much of course he had heard the night before—that might be, but how was it that Fräulein Cécile was ill, *gnädiger Herr* gone travelling, and the Herr Lieutenant come and gone like a flash of lightning, all in the same day? He did not like it at all.

"Good-bye, Fritz, and thank you for getting me here in time."

"*Adieu, gnädiges Fräuleinchen,*" replied he, taking Hannah's hand, and kissing it respectfully; "a happy journey to you, and a speedy return to Robewitz!"

With a sigh of relief Hannah leant back in her seat, and began to consider the events of the last

four and twenty hours; it was a comfort that she was on her journey homewards at last; a nervous horror had seized her that something unforeseen would happen, and that she should be delayed in getting to Berlin; that she would miss Jim altogether, and arrive too late at Dr. Burton's. She breathed more freely when the train began to move slowly from the platform—no, it stopped again, and shunted back a few yards; the guard, with a green flag in his hand, was rushing along and shouting. What was the matter? Hannah looked rather anxiously at her companion, a stout middle-aged lady, smothered in wraps; she had evidently been travelling all night, and did not wish to be disturbed, for after opening her eyes in a sleepy fashion, she subsided into her corner, and appeared to sleep immediately.

"*Nicht rauch Coupée.*"

Yes, the gentleman must come forward. The guard hurriedly flung open the door, threw in a bag, the gentleman jumped into the carriage, the train moved on, and Hannah found herself face to face with the last person in the world whom she would have chosen for a travelling companion—Otto von Felsensee. It would be hard to say which of the two young people looked and felt more embarrassed, but Otto was the first to recover himself.

"*You* here, Fräulein Hannah! I had imagined you miles away at Robewitz."

"I have had bad news from home," stammered Hannah, getting scarlet in the face, as it flashed upon her that Cécile, if she ever came to hear of their meeting, would look upon the whole thing as a pre-arranged plan.

"I am distressed to hear it. Are you thinking of returning to London?"

"Most likely; it depends upon what news I have when I get to Berlin."

"I hope it may be better than you expect."

"Thank you. You are very kind."

Hannah looked out of the window persistently for the next few minutes, the sun was so warm that the snow had melted in places, and there were large patches of green visible in the fields.

"It was very sudden your leaving Robewitz, was it not?" asked Otto.

"Yes, I had no notion of it yesterday, till I had this letter."

"Are you expected in Berlin?"

"No, I must telegraph when the train stops, if I can."

"You will have time to do that. We have to wait twenty minutes for the up-train at Q——. You need not be at all anxious about it."

Otto was very sorry for Hannah; if there had been any other mode of relieving her of his presence than the imminently unpractical one of throwing himself out of the window, he would willingly have

availed himself of it. As it was, he handed her a paper and resigned himself to the very unaccustomed and unenviable position of being in the way, though not through any fault of his own. Hannah accepted the paper, and for a quarter of an hour at least she held it up to her eyes, and by so doing screened herself off from observation; then she found it impossible to keep up the pretence of forgetting last night's occurrence any longer.

"Herr von Felsensee!"

"*Mein geehrtes Fräulein!*"

Down went the Lieutenant's book; he was all attention.

"Why don't you talk to me about Robewitz? You have not even asked me how they are."

"It is a subject that I imagined you would wish to avoid."

"Then you imagined quite wrong."

"I must apologise," said Otto, who felt, not unnaturally, that here he was being reproached without cause. "I hope you left Fräulein Linden quite well, and her niece also?"

"Cécile is not at all well; she looks exceedingly ill."

The Lieutenant regretted to hear it; he expressed a hope that the approaching change in the weather (the thaw had already commenced) would prove beneficial to the health of Fräulein Cécile.

"I can't help saying how distressed I was to

have been the cause of that absurd story," said Hannah, plunging into the heart of the subject after her fashion; "of course Cécile was annoyed. I was too, and so were you."

Yes, Otto could not deny that he had been more hurt by the whole transaction than he cared to own.

"You will write to her directly you get to the end of your journey, won't you?" asked Hannah, as she remembered Cécile's whispered farewell; "and then everything will be straight once more."

"Have you taken into consideration the answer that such a letter would be likely to receive?"

Otto was essentially a good-tempered man, and it took a good deal to ruffle him, but he was not just now in the mood to allow himself to be converted into a shuttlecock for the amusement of these two girls; still less did he intend to lay himself open to the humiliation of receiving a direct refusal from Cécile. Even his mother had not suggested such a course of proceeding.

"I have taken *everything* into consideration," said Hannah, "and I am sure that the answer will be in the highest degree satisfactory. Do write, Herr Lieutenant, or go back to-morrow."

Otto shook his head, but he could not help smiling at this suggestion.

"It is not probable that I shall get another day's leave before Easter. It was only by special favour that I got off yesterday morning. People in author-

ity do not give that importance to the whims, or shall I say caprices, of young ladies, that you do? Also, my visit to Robewitz was not of so pleasing a nature that I should wish to repeat it."

"Don't you ever get put out yourself?" asked Hannah, "that you are so severe on the caprices of young ladies—especially when they are very sorry afterwards, and only long for an opportunity of saying so."

"To tell you the honest truth, Fräulein Hannah, I am in a state of 'put out,' as you call it, at this present moment. Now I come to consider it, *you* have been the greatest sufferer in consequence of this stupid mistake. I owe you many apologies, which I now offer, and as I have a great regard for your penetration I will follow your advice and write to Cécile directly I get back. Is that right?"

Yes; Hannah was completely satisfied now; she forgot her embarrassment, and how she had wished her companion a hundred miles away. She began to talk on other subjects, and confided to him her hopes and fears about Dr. Burton's recovery, just as she would have done in the days when she first made the Lieutenant's acquaintance in Bernsdorf.

The train stopped at Q——, and the time had not seemed so very long after all. Here Herr von Felsensee was recognised by an acquaintance, and after having ordered Hannah some refreshment he withdrew, promising to return in time to telegraph

to Berlin. Hannah ate her soup, and looked at the clock, and wondered what Frau Mühlbach would say to her speedy return from the Lindens', and also whether Jim Penwarden would come to meet her at the station.

A train arrived, and a crowd of passengers began pushing their way into the waiting-room. Hannah began to think that she would not wait for the Lieutenant; it would be better not to run the risk of his having remembered the telegrams. She asked her way to the office, and followed a stout old gentleman into a little room; two or three people were waiting behind her; a bell rang violently; she felt that she must be quick, it would never do to miss the train.

"Allow me," she said, to the old gentleman, and stretched out her hand for a paper. Some one at the side pushed against her; another gentleman instantly made way for her.

"Can I assist you, *mein Fräulein?*" he asked. The voice was strangely familiar. Hannah put down her pencil in the very act of writing 'Come and meet me.' It was needless to telegraph when Jim himself was by her side.

"Hannah!" he exclaimed, recognising her even before she turned round; "what a fortunate thing that I have met you! I was on my way to Kleinstadt."

"Were you? I thought you were in Berlin. Do you know that Dr. Burton is very ill?"

"Yes, but he is better—very weak still, but going on favourably. I saw him when I was in London three days ago; he is exceedingly anxious to see you, and I offered to look you up and find out if you were not thinking about coming home; I have a message from Mrs. Walter to the same effect. But what are you doing here?"

"Telegraphing to Frau Mühlbach and to you. It's not the first time that you have advised me what to do on an emergency. Do you remember when I was a small child and you offered to help me out of my difficulty?"

Jim smiled. Except that she had grown a foot or so in height he did not see any difference in the Hannah of to-day; he had forgotten his first impression, that she had become a haughty young lady who would be bored at having to talk to an old friend. However, there was no time now, in a crowd of pushing people, to indulge in reminiscences; if they were to catch the express train he must get a ticket at once, and put off all the questions he was longing to ask till a more favourable opportunity.

Hannah was happy; jumping at once from the lowest depths of despondency, she came to the conclusion that Dr. Burton was going to get well again very soon; he had naturally exaggerated the account of his own illness, and she herself had been so miserable when the letter came that she had looked upon things from an unnecessarily gloomy point of

view; now that she had met Jim it was all right. She did not give one thought to Otto von Felsensee till the very last minute, not indeed till he came hurrying up to her from one door just as Jim (with his ticket) appeared at another.

"Now, Hannah, if you are ready, we had better take our seats."

"*Mein gnädiges Fräulein*——" Otto became conscious of Jim's presence and stopped short.

Hannah looked from one to the other and blushed in the most provoking way.

"Lieutenant von Felsensee, Mr. Penwarden."

Otto made the stiffest of salutations, and Jim said pleasantly: "I have often had the pleasure of hearing about you; I am happy to make your acquaintance."

The Lieutenant bowed again.

"Mr. Penwarden was actually going to Robewitz to fetch me," explained Hannah; "it is fortunate that we happened to meet."

"And *this* is the *Engländer* whose absence was so regretted last summer," thought Otto, as he stood at the train door, and noticed the change in Hannah's looks. She seemed to have entirely recovered from her fatigue; all the distress had faded out of her face, and, with glowing cheeks and sparkling eyes, she looked just as she had done the day he had been introduced to her in Frau Schwarz's hot little parlour. It was quite clear to him that he would

not intrude a second time, so, on the spur of the moment, he invented a near and dear friend who was at the farther end of the train, and would be glad of his society. Now that he knew Fräulein Hannah to be under so excellent an escort, he would, if she permitted, retire.

"All passengers take their seats!" shouted the guard.

"I wish you every happiness, Fräulein Hannah," said Otto; "and be assured that I will not forget your kind advice. Cécile shall write to you. Adieu!"

"Good-bye; give my best love to her. I hope it will all be settled very soon."

Hannah turned to Jim, who had been an attentive observer of this little scene. "Do you like him?" she asked anxiously, thinking he did not look altogether pleased; "oh! I hope you do."

"Yes, I certainly like him, and he is magnificently handsome."

There was a pause, then Hannah said: "I suppose, if I had stayed another day at the Lindens', I should have had Ada's letter telling me to come home. I can't make out why she went to see Dr. Burton, because they usen't to be on good terms."

"Mrs. Tarne has been to see him twice since his illness, she told me that he was her husband's oldest friend."

"That's quite true; but it is so mysterious about

the business matter," said Hannah meditatively. "I can't understand it."

"And *I* can't understand how you came to leave the Lindens in such a hurry. Will you tell me all about it?"

Hannah was glad to find a sympathising listener; she was longing to tell the story of her experiences since she had left Berlin. Jim Penwarden was very attentive; he even stopped her now and then to ask a question, or to have a circumstance explained that she had passed over as unimportant.

What a long time it seemed since she had said good-bye to Cécile! and yet it was only this morning. Hannah softened her account of last night's proceedings, as she perceived Jim's growing indignation, and then she asked: "Now do you think I was wrong to come away?"

"I think you were perfectly right. This Fräulein Cécile must be a most disagreeable girl. I can't imagine how she could treat you so badly."

"She is very fond of Otto von Felsensee, and (it sounds conceited, but you will understand) she was jealous—jealous of me!"

"I can't wonder at that," said Jim with a sad smile, "but it doesn't excuse her behaviour to you."

"Why can't you wonder at that?"

"Perhaps you will think that I have no right to ask such a question, but for the sake of old

days, forgive me. Were you not engaged to the Lieutenant?"

"Certainly and decidedly not," said Hannah indignantly; "you are as bad as Cécile. I liked him better than any of the other people who came to the Frau Doctorin's, but I never dreamt of such a thing, nor did he. Don't you believe me?"

"I believe everything that you tell me," said Jim, conscious that he had given the Lieutenant credit for admiring Hannah immensely. "I was afraid I should vex you; I had no business to ask impertinent questions."

"I am not vexed at all," said Hannah, who was almost in tears; "only I had been looking forward to seeing you. I promised that I would ask you if I wanted any help, and I *did* think that you would understand."

"Did you really think about me in your trouble?" asked Jim gladly. "Hannah, that makes me very happy. I'm sorry I made that mistake; try and forget it."

This piece of information had taken a great load off his mind. He had come prepared to do his best for Hannah and her happiness, even to congratulate her upon her engagement to the Lieutenant (if needs were), and to offer to smooth the way at home; it was not likely that Walter Tarne would regard any foreign officer as a suitable brother-in-law, even one of such high repute as Otto von

Felsensee. Well, he had made a mistake, and in his anxiety to hear how affairs stood, had said exactly the thing which most distressed Hannah. How was she to know that he was deeply in love with her? that his one thought since their last meeting had been when he was to see her again, and that he had been haunted by her pale face and lovely gray eyes? He had come to the deliberate conclusion that his case was hopeless—suppose he had made a mistake there too?

"It seems to me," said Hannah, "that I must be in a very quarrelsome mood, and I ought to be so happy. Let us make it up, Mr. Penwarden."

This was pronounced with some hesitation; the "Mr." sounded strangely unnatural.

"If there is anything to make up, it is all my fault," said Jim, in such a strange choking kind of voice that Hannah looked up distressed. "I can't help it. I *must* tell you how glad I am that you are not going to marry that Lieutenant. I'm sure he is a good fellow," he went on hurriedly. "Advocate Schmidt spoke very highly of him."

"Then why are you so rejoiced?" asked Hannah, rather maliciously; "it would have been a good thing for me (as you *will* imagine impossibilities); and think how delighted Ada would have been."

"Because," said Jim very quietly, "I love you better than the whole world besides, and I have come on purpose to ask you to be my wife. Now

that I know you are free, I have a right to say so."

"Mr. Penwarden," broke in Hannah, "you *know* you don't mean it!"

"I know very well that I have cared for you ever since you were a little girl, and our dear Ruth talked to me about you. Hannah, won't you listen to me?"

"No, no!" exclaimed Hannah, turning her head away and staring out of the window, "don't say any more. I can't listen to you."

"Is it true then, my dear, that I have come too late? Ever since I saw you in the summer I have known how dearly I love you. I was afraid of taking you by surprise and troubling you, and now I have come too late, too late."

"It's not that," said Hannah, making a violent effort to appear calm and collected; she could not allow him to believe a lie.

"What then?" asked he, taking her hand in his.

"Mr. Penwarden!" Hannah drew herself up, and turned her face towards him, though she kept her eyes fixed on the ground; "you are very good. I am very grateful to you, but (drawing her hand away from his) don't you see what I have done? I have told you all my troubles, and now you feel so sorry for me that——"

"That I ask you to become my wife?"

"Yes; and I never imagined that you would, and

to-morrow you will wish that you had never said it; and—and I cannot endure that you should sacrifice yourself because you are sorry for me." This was said vehemently, through half-strangled sobs.

"Dear Hannah, do you think you can love me a little? Then I can tell you better how I have thought of you for years, and longed to remind you of your promise that you would not forget me. Hannah, don't cry, my dear!"

She looked up, half-smiling through her tears at the memory of their farewell walk on the Yarmouth sands, and her great wish to go away with him to the Cape, and leave her childish troubles behind. As she met the loving gaze of his honest eyes, the old childish spirit of trust and love rose up strong within her, and she knew that she loved him with her whole heart. He had got up from his seat, in his agitation, and now stood with one arm leaning against the compartment of the carriage. "Don't cry, Hannah!" he repeated; "have I grieved you so?"

"No. Oh, no."

"Will you put all these fancies out of your head about sacrifice, and try and like me a little?"

He came nearer now, and waited patiently for her answer.

"I can't!" she whispered.

"God help me!" It was a sudden and bitter exclamation; his voice sounded quite changed. Then Hannah, too, started from her seat, and looked at

him with wide open eyes, the childish expression of faith and love shining in them.

"Don't. I didn't mean that, only——"

He understood it all now; no need to ask another question or to torture himself with the notion that she could never care for him.

"My darling!" he murmured, as he clasped her in his arms, and Hannah said—

"I can't say I will like you a little, because I do like you already very, very much!"

* * * *

Ada's reception of her sister-in-law was decidedly gracious. She greeted her with deference, and contemplated her from time to time with curiosity not unmixed with approval.

"You are looking well, Hannah—very well; your foreign gaieties have agreed with you thoroughly, and you have acquired a certain *ton* which was wanting in you before. *Who* was that who drove away in the cab, did you say?"

"Jim Penwarden. He has gone to Highgate; he will call on you to-morrow morning early."

Well might Ada consider Hannah improved; she was over-brimming with that quiet happiness that shows itself in every movement and gesture.

"A very silent, odd, young man to be sure, and such a favourite with our dear Dr. Burton! Quite extraordinary, I do not see the attraction. Well," continued Ada, as Hannah made no answer, "dear

Dr. Burton is much better, though we cannot be certain that the improvement is permanent. I promised to take you there this afternoon, Hannah, and I may as well prepare your mind for the intelligence that he will communicate to you."

"I can't think what it is," said Hannah. She was wondering whether Jim had got to Highgate by this time, and if he had told Aunt Rachel, and whether he would come and fetch her away very early to-morrow morning.

"With a very proper feeling," said Ada (becoming more and more mysterious), "Dr. Burton confided to me some days ago—his illness has since then providentially taken a turn which we little anticipated at the time—he confided to me, as your nearest relative in England, that he had made his will some six years back, leaving you (with the exception of a few legacies) his sole heiress."

"Me!" exclaimed Hannah; she had just decided that Jim and Aunt Rachel were talking together in the drawing-room before luncheon.

"Do not raise your expectations too high, my dear Hannah; it is no large fortune, but a sufficiency. It will bring you, Dr. Burton assures me, about £500 a year. On hearing this, I agreed with our old friend in thinking your immediate return advisable."

"What an extraordinary thing!" said Hannah. "I hope I shan't get it for years and years!"

"A very proper sentiment, my dear Hannah, and one with which we must all coincide, remembering *how* uncertain life is ever, even for the young and healthy." Here Ada, after making another reference to providence, put her handkerchief to her eyes for a second, and then told Hannah that she very much admired the style in which her hair was arranged.

The news of Hannah's engagement to James Penwarden (duly imparted to her on the following morning) was, to a certain extent, a shock to Mrs. Walter Tarne's mind. She had never liked that strange man from the colonies. She had habitually cherished a latent jealousy of the Penwardens as a family, besides which the whole affair appeared to her to have been settled in a most hurried and unceremonious manner—her sister-in-law having become a person of consideration since the announcement of Dr. Burton's intentions. On the other hand, as Ada speedily ascertained, Dr. Burton was delighted; and who could say? he *might* recover from his illness—it seemed not unlikely—in which case Hannah would not come into her property for another ten or perhaps twenty years, and James Penwarden was well able to afford to marry at once. At first Ada had suggested that he had waited to propose to Hannah till he had made quite sure of her good fortune, but this idea having been repudiated with indignation by Dr. Burton, she deemed it prudent to drop the subject entirely, and for the future to

console herself with the thought that Walter would raise no objections, and that Hannah, even from a little child, had always been so very odd and different from other girls!

* * * *

Two or three mild days had almost brought the shrubs into bud; the sky was clear, except for the pearl-white clouds that floated here and there, and the wind blew soft and warm. A ray of sunshine came pouring into the empty library at Highgate; a well-fed sparrow hopped audaciously twittering on the very threshold of the open window. There was no one to frighten him away; the two occupants of the room, walking up and down arm in arm, were much too engrossed with each other's society to turn their eyes in the direction of the window, or to notice his intrusion.

"So I get my wish after all," Hannah was saying, with the happy smile on her face that Jim loved to see; "and this time you won't leave me behind. Do you remember the day at Yarmouth, Jim, when you were hard-hearted and said that I couldn't be spared at home?"

"I remember *all* about it, and I have got your keepsake still."

"What was that?" asked Hannah curiously.

He took out his pocket-book. Carefully put away in one of the pockets was a tiny bit of a broken crockery plate.

"Did I really give you that?" said Hannah, blushing; "what a pity it's too large for your watch chain! Throw it away, dear Jim."

She put out her hand, but Jim said No; the love-birds had been his talisman so many years, he could not spare them—not just yet—but he kept Hannah's hand in his, and they stood together by the open window, looking out into the sunshine.

"Jim," said Hannah, after a long silence, "did you love Ruth *very* much?"

"Yes, dearest; don't you know I did?"

Hannah's sweet eyes were full of tears.

"I am so very glad," she whispered; "it makes me happy to think of her. Dear Ruth!"

THE END.

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